ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN SOCIAL WORK
International Perspective

Edited by

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Ethical issues and dilemmas are being increasingly discussed in social work theory and practice, in policy decisions and research. There are several reasons for such a strong interest in ethical debates in the current social sciences, including social work: the growing gap between rich and poor in the industrialised countries as well as the gaps between different regions and continents; conflicts between cultures, traditions and different religions in a highly interconnected globalised world; man-made environmental disasters, the unimaginable development of biotechnology and the punitive states, to name a few. The impact of these developments on social work is quite crucial, considering both, the raise of the authoritarian state as well as a relative weakness and poverty of the state vis-à-vis an all-powerful financial market fuelled by a neoliberal thought which not only gives priority to the interests of the economy, but also legitimises social hierarchy and inequality on the basis of the ideology of meritocracy. This development is undermining the premises of democracy, which is based not only on equal political rights, but also on the concept of fair distribution of wealth and symbolic resources. Neoliberalism in social work implies an insistence that priority be given to efficiency and provides a powerful stimulus for the commodification of social work practice. Thus social workers not only have to undergo scrutiny concerning their efficiency; they also have to accept and execute a highly discriminating social order by narrowing rules of access and by normalising and sanctioning those who supposedly do not meet societal demands and do not “fit in society”.

Social work generates in its teaching a picture of a democratic and just society, but at the same time – like all societal institutions – it is part of the contradictory structure of a society which utilises socio-economic and other hierarchic structures (such as those based on gender, ethnicity, bodily ability, age, sexual orientation, language, religion etc.) to divide and select individuals. Yet social work is formally dedicated to generating equal chances and greater participation for every member of society. This is a central challenge for ethics in social work. It follows that the most important international social work organisations, the IFSW and the IASSW, list individual well-being
as well as social change aimed at furthering social justice as the basic principles of ethics in social work. These organizations also view ethical awareness as a fundamental part of the professional practices of social workers.

However, ethics is not only about the implementation of high moral standards; in many cases, it also serves the ideological function of masking an undesirable reality: for example, defining social work as a moral profession might prevent one from critically reflecting on its partially discriminating and even oppressive functions. This danger is especially acute when ethics is reduced to guidelines for concrete decisions concerning the dilemmatic situations presented by clients and does not consider the societal context and especially the frame of reference set by the values of institutionalised social work as well as the social position of the social worker.

The social position of social work is especially crucial considering the fact that in every society there are always a number of different moral and ethical principles and beliefs, represented by different individuals, groups and communities. In large societies, these coexist and form a diverse body of ethics and principles which sometimes clash with each other and divide societies according to different ethical principles. Globalisation fuels this plurality through migration processes and transnational reference systems. Social work operates at the centre of these conflicts. Its position often is shaped by the interests and perspectives of the nation state, since it is usually situated in a national context and relies primarily on funding from the state. On the other hand, social work claims that it has an ethical obligation to act on behalf of universal rights and basic human needs.

This conflict is part of the more general tension between universalism and particularism discussed by Silvia Staub-Bernasconi. The claim that human needs should be addressed on the basis of universal human rights has to question the standards which social work enacts through its institutions: whom do these standards address, which language do they speak, which problems count, who seems to be entitled to attention and support. Do social workers show respect for different cultures, religions and ideologies, or are they mainly committed to universal norms which are “basically” the same for all? Silvia Staub-Bernasconi argues that universalism has often served to mask hegemonic western claims; at the same time, contextualisation and cultural pluralism may neglect individual rights and leave oppression unquestionned. The more dogmatic each of these positions is, the more oppressive it tends to be. The key challenge is establishing an intercultural dialogue which would insist on the fulfilment of universal human needs and at the same time consider and respect the different ways in which context-specific human wishes are met.

Most of these issues are considered and analysed by the authors of this important volume. Maria Maiss shows how social work has to translate basic principles and perspectives from one context into another. This imperative was already formulated in the early decades of the last century by Jane Addams, who
Introduction

claimed that social work professionals have to reflect on their standpoint by exposing themselves to the perplexity of new situations, since one’s perspective is always restricted by the narrowness of his or her own experience. In order to counteract deliberate selection from a narrow range of experiences, social workers are morally obliged to choose experiences which differ from their own. Jane Addams therefore understands ethics as an ongoing struggle to integrate new experiences with past thoughts in order to constantly reassess them.

This means that the cultural basis of the individual social worker, as well as social work as an institution, is constantly subject to negotiation. This is especially true in the case of the concepts of post-Apartheid and post-colonial social work discussed by Linda Smith, where the question of “modern” social work vis-à-vis the “traditional” perspectives of the clients is embedded in power relations and a long history of domination. The same can be said for many immigration societies, where the question of majority and minority is often understood as a question of tradition versus modernity. This can present a problem for professional social work, which is often based – implicitly or explicitly – on modernisation theory. This theory understands religion as something that will be gradually overcome by modern science and secularism and views religion as a relic of pre-modern times which is essentially opposed to the development of human freedom and self-determination.

Yet there is no evidence that religion is on the decline in today’s world. Not only is religiosity increasing on a worldwide level; public discourse is being increasingly shaped by religious perspectives, to the extent that we can speak of a religious turn since final decade of the past century. Birgit Rommelspacher shows how this discourse has an increasing tendency to understand global as well as societal and interpersonal conflicts as religious ones, in contrast to past approaches, which were predominantly political or economic. At the same time, religious institutions such as the Christian churches in Europe are claiming a more prominent role in their societies mainly by emphasising their special competence in ethics. The stronger this claim becomes, the more social work is understood as a primarily moral profession which has to be reinterpreted by means of Christian categories: clients’ rights to support are replaced, to an ever greater extent, by the idea of benevolent charity, and the professional intervention becomes a “good deed”. This type of moralisation presents a great danger for the standards of professionalisation.

The split between a science-based “non-moral” or rational profession and a religious-based or “natural” moral approach to charity is in certain respects also reflected in the debate between ethics of justice and care, as Ruth Großmaß points out. However, the philosophical debate of the last decades has shown that care is not a “natural” or female “characteristic”, but just another approach to interpersonal relations. The care perspective emphasises the individual context and accepts the asymmetrical structure between the vulnerable or needy and the caregiver, whereas the perspective of justice is based on the
concept of the community and is sensitive to the question how to realise the participation of every member and accomplish distributional justice. The two perspectives cannot be completely reconciled, and one should be aware that there are always different approaches, consequently, it may be necessary to decide whether to intervene on an individual or on a political level.

The challenge of meeting individual needs and at the same time furthering social justice is especially crucial in social work with people with disabilities. In many cases, the claim that these persons are being cared for in an individual manner because of their specific situation through the creation of special working places in sheltered homes has been merely a "front" for legitimised exclusion and exploitation. As Darja Zaviršek points out, the same process of regular workfare which is said to further structural equality can also be exclusionary as well. Jobs requiring little or no qualifications and work without payment do not ensure justice and inclusion, but rather reinforce the old-fashioned ideology of work. While the mainstreaming of work stands in contrast to a past marked by the systematic exclusion of persons with disabilities from labour and creative work, it comes at a time when the idea of the “end of work” is gradually replacing the old work ideology. Therefore, it is not occupation as such which is at the core of disability ethics, but rather meaningful work and the ethics of independent living.

These reflections reveal different aspects of what is called ethics in social work. However, many times this concept is reduced to a checklist and a summary of lofty values imposed on the professional as a basis for decision making in conflicting situations. Sara Banks claims that ethics is embedded in life and stresses the need for reflection on the personal, political, professional and societal implications of social work interventions. Ethics has to be reflected in the context and in the way that it shapes one’s motivation, attentiveness, responsibility and competence.

Vivienne Bozalek gives a good example of how one can stimulate reflection on different aspects of ethics among students in social work teaching. She describes a course in which students analyse their own experiences with dilemmatic situations with reference to specific theories and reflect on the construction of their knowledge with critical peers. This reflection on their role as social workers and their social position and that of the users and on the decision-making process is not only relevant for social work practitioners; the lessons learned are also of great value to researchers. Ana Sobočan points out that, while it is widely acknowledged that researchers face similar dilemmas concerning strategies of knowledge production, questions of ethics and the dissemination of knowledge generally receive little attention. The researchers’ responsibility extends beyond the researcher-researched relation into the sphere of the public and the political. Researchers therefore also have a responsibility to use the research findings for promoting social change and bettering the life of the service users.
An important aspect of how cultural stance shapes communication and discourses is the use of language, as Tatsuru Akimoto shows. He emphasises that power structures are reproduced by the use (or exclusion) of specific languages. This is particularly remarkable in the case of organisations such as the IASSW, which emphasise that language is a human rights issue and a matter of democracy, but at the same time reproduce traditional power structures by excluding relevant language groups.

The gap between the claim of social justice and exclusionary practice presents a special challenge for managers in social work institutions. Lynne Healy shows how managers influence the informal climate and set norms, since it is the “culture of ethics” in an institution that reduces ethical violations and creates conditions for ethical reflection and decision making. Concerning the dilemma between the ethics of justice and care, managers are often more responsible for the justice perspective because they must carefully use the limited social resources available to the agencies they represent. However, this obligation is often reduced or distorted into an ideology of control and an intention to cheapen or even deny social services.

This brings us back to the question of which interests are served in social work and who sets the agenda, a question which has long been the subject of discussions in the form of the conflict between the state and the client, with the social worker – stuck in the middle – being torn apart by the resulting double mandate. However, these discussions fail to recognise that the social worker and his/her institutions are part of the state and society, and as such are heavily involved in generating specific interests and reproducing dominant as well as critical norms. The metaphor of the social worker as a neutral agent caught between conflicting sides must therefore be revised. Silvia Staub-Bernasconi has suggested that this “double mandate” be reconceived as a “triple mandate”, the third dimension being the professional social worker’s obligation to take into account a) the principles of science, especially science-based intervention and b) professional ethics, of which human rights are a significant part. This third mandate is the basis not only for the critical assessment of claims from the state and the clients, but also for the reformulation or even refusal of illegitimate mandates. As a matter of fact, the third mandate makes concrete and more precise the ideas formulated in the UN/IFSW/IASSW manual “Human Rights and Social Work. A Manual for Schools of Social Work and the Social Work Profession” (Geneva 1992), which states that when dilemmas arise between state and client, the needs and rights of the clients have priority.

The editors of the book would like to thank all of the authors for their outstanding contributions to this important volume on current ethical dilemmas in social work. We would like to thank the two international reviewers, prof. Marian Barnes and prof. Shimon Spiro, for their intellectual feedback.

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We hope that this book will be used by doctoral students of social work and other social sciences, academics and researchers, and that it will make a cognitive impact on social work theory and practice by furthering our understanding of international ethical dilemmas in the framework of an increasingly complex world.

Darja Zaviršek, Birgit Rommelspacher, Silvia Staub-Bernasconi,

Editors and academic board members of Indosow

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PART I

Ethical conflicts and their philosophical implications
Chapter 1

**Human Rights – Facing Dilemmas between Universalism and Pluralism/Contextualism**

Silvia M. Staub-Bernasconi

**Introduction**

In all consensual international documents about the “definition of the profession of social work”, “ethics in social work” and “global standards for the education and training of the social work profession”, human rights are mentioned as a *universal*, regulative idea for critical reflection on the theory, ethics and practice of social work (special supplement of the *International Journal of Social Work* 2007). This is also obvious in the many places where these documents mention that one has to be sensitive to “context-specific realities” and “promote respect for traditions, cultures, ideologies, beliefs and religions amongst different ethnic groups and societies, insofar as these do not conflict with the fundamental human rights of people” (ibid.: 16, 17). This means that the dilemma between universalism and contextualism in relation to human rights has been solved by the – albeit fragile – consensus that human rights are universal norms for the social work profession. This also means that the profession is legitimised to criticise context-specific, cultural or religious values, ideologies and norms when they contradict the universal claim for the respect of individual human dignity and human rights. Nevertheless, the profession can’t avoid taking seriously worldwide criticism of the “biased” and “hegemonic western universalism” of human rights (c.f. Wallerstein 2007). This is especially necessary in light of the fact that this claim of universalism was ratified at the World Conference in Vienna in 1993 despite resistance from dictatorships (China, Suharto in Indonesia), the ruling clerics in Iran etc. This affirmation didn’t silence criticism about the “Western notion of universalism” or the “Eurocentrism” of human rights. On the contrary: The promotion of these ideals have to deal with accusations of double standards and/or neo-colonialism in the guise of humanism – and in many cases this is true. Consequently, many try to avoid condemnation by switching to the opposite position: uncritical cultural pluralism and tolerance, encouraged and reinforced by the premises of postmodern constructivism.¹ But how can social work identify and condemn violations of human rights

¹ But, if I’m not mistaken, postmodern thinking is, paradoxically, an epistemology “born” and developed in the affluent “capitalist western countries".
perpetrated by states, state-dependent social and health services, courts, and even clients (domestic violence, for example) from a universal standpoint and according to its professional values if every value or norm is only of individual/subjective or local-contextual relevance?

This contribution addresses this dilemma and the corresponding questions. It begins with criticisms of both universalism and contextualism/pluralism\(^2\) as approaches to human rights. Instead of declaring them irrelevant in order to “save” one’s position, or considering them irreconcilable standpoints, I suggest that the target of criticism in each case is in fact a specific version of these positions, namely hegemonic universalism and fundamentalist pluralism. These types are then defined in terms of their specific epistemological and interactional characteristics. Next, a moderate conception of universalism and pluralism is introduced; this approach could present a way out of this dilemma. A situation of overcoming war and conflicts between Christians and Muslims is used to illustrate these moderate versions, and serves as a basis for the formulation of some guidelines for the discourse between universalists and contextualists which could optimise the chances for mutual understanding – on the condition that both camps earnestly seek this mutual understanding. Because the first version of this contribution was presented at a conference in South Africa, texts by African authors will mainly be referred to.\(^3\)

**Criticism of the universalism and contextualism/relativism of human rights**

Makau Mutua, co-founder and chairman of the Nairobi-based Kenya Human Rights Commission, starts his critique of Western universalism with the following sentence: “I have always found human suffering unacceptable. But I did not name my struggle against deprivation, dehumanization, and oppression a fight for human rights” (2002: ix). He argues that the human rights enterprise mistakenly presents itself as a final truth, as a glimpse of utopia without which human advancement is not possible. It is, for the most part, a Eurocentric formula for the reconstruction of non-Western societies that aims to transplant the Holy Trinity of liberalism, democracy, and human rights:

\(^2\) I use the concepts of pluralism and contextualism as synonyms, although one could, or even should, make a distinction between “contextualism” as referring to geographical, economic, political characteristics of a specific context and “pluralism” as referring to cultural and sub-cultural – especially ethnic or religious – characteristics of a specific context. Yet, within the scope of this paper, both arguments serve the same aim, namely to relativise the relevance and implementation of human rights.

International human rights fall within the historical continuum of the European colonial project in which whites pose as the saviors of a benighted and savage non-European world. The white human rights zealot joins the unbroken chain that connects him to the colonial administrator, the Bible-wielding missionary, and the merchant of free enterprise. Salvation in the modern world is presented as only possible through the holy trinity of human rights, political democracy, and free market (ibid.: 2).

According to Mutua, the corpus of human rights seeks to foster diversity, but does so only under the non-negotiable idea of Western political liberal democracy as the “final inflexible truth” (ibid.: 2). This means “freezing liberalism in time” (ibid.: 5).

Amartya Sen points out – as one example of this historical continuity – the following paradox: One can’t overlook that the G-8-States (with the exception of Japan; now the G-20 States) are the biggest producer and dealer of weapons on the world market. The US alone signs for about half of the exports. In recent years, two thirds of the arms sold went to impoverished Africa. Through this foreign policy of dual morality, they clearly undermine “freedom and individual rights” in other, non-Western, countries (2007: 109). And one could add that war is a violation of almost all human rights.

Another African author, Bénézet Bujo, points out the same Western bias or Eurocentrism in various Articles of the UN Declaration (1991: 211–112):

- **Art. 16.2:** Marriage shall be entered only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. According to many Africans, marriage is not a contract between two persons, but a covenant between two communities.
- **Art. 17:** Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. According to the African tradition, property is never private; the individual administers property in the name of the community.
- **Art. 26.3:** Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. In many parts of Africa, children belong not only to their parents, but to all living family members and ancestors. This is because parents alone aren’t able to transmit an entire body of wisdom that encompasses many generations of ancestors.

According to these notions, the individual *per se* isn’t the bearer of human rights; human rights are given to the individual by the community.

These and other critiques have led to the formulation of an African Human Rights Charter (the Banjul Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, 23 Oct. 1986), as well as Asian, Islamic and Russian charters or philosophies of Human Rights. So one could say that approaches to human rights that stress cultural diversity and pluralism are an answer to the colonial or hegemonial universalism of the West, and especially of Europe. One has to be aware of this before criticising or even rejecting a contextual interpretation of human rights.
At the same time, there has also been a great deal of criticism of pluralism and contextualism accompanied by a notion of relativism which states that it is impossible to detect "the objective truth". In his book Human Rights in Iran: the Abuse of Cultural Relativism (2001), Afshari shows the extreme consequences of such a position by pointing out dictators’ attempts to hide human rights abuses by calling oppression an authentic cultural practice.

Detailed critical issues of pluralism include:

- One has to carefully diagnose who is making the plea for pluralism. More precisely: Who is going to benefit from such a policy? Patriarchal men? (Corrupt) politicians or dictators? (Phillips 2007: 1)
- While many critics identify the dominance of Western culture and reject what they view as the imperialist, arrogant assertion of one true road to general or gender equality, they often find themselves unable to articulate criticisms of imperialism, gender-inequality, References, or violence legitimated by religion or culture in non-Western societies or in their own societies (ibid.: 2).
- It is interesting to contrast the dominant discussion about cultural diversity and increasing anxieties concerning cultural segregation with relative complacency concerning intensified class segregation. Does the multiculturalism debate divert from the very serious socio-structural problem of extreme wealth and poverty, which is, at the same time, one of the causes of cultural segregation and diversity (ibid.: 6)?
- Evoking diversity means mainly cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. One should add classism in the form of class identities. Also, the reduction of individuals and societies to a single dimension and the fiction that they can be explained and understood through culture alone is a gross simplification.
- The reduction of the identity of individuals or groups to a single cultural – in particular ethnic or religious – dimension can easily be misused for some of the worst outbursts of intolerance, fanaticism and violence.
- Lastly, considering Bénézet Bujo’s criticism of the special articles of the UN declaration (see above), one would have to ask whether the collective and its traditions and possible quest for harmony has absolute priority and thus unlimited power over the individual. Are there possibilities for the individual to question this view, to negotiate and demand a balance between the legitimate ethical demands of a community, society or clan-family and the human rights conferred upon the individual?

Most of the time, the two sets of critical responses break down into accusations that provoke arguments in defence of the superiority of one’s position. As a matter of fact, it is almost impossible to find common ground for debate and empirical verification. If one is not willing to tolerate either position as it
presents itself, it is necessary to ask: Is there a possible third position that could make this polarisation less controversial? Is there a possibility to escape the dualism of universal, colonial hegemony and a context-related relativism accompanied by indifference disguised as tolerance? My provisional answer and thesis is that the condition for such a position is the differentiation of hegemonial universalism on the one hand and fundamentalist pluralism on the other and the comparing and contrasting of these with moderate conceptions of universalism and pluralism.

The characteristics of hegemonial universalism and fundamentalist pluralism

Universalism and pluralistic relativism are, first of all, a general topic of epistemology (i.e. the study of the ways in which we perceive and interpret reality) (see Bunge 1999, 1998, 1996). As long as they are discussed respectfully in general debates, they won’t harm anybody. But if their respective promoters become allied with actors who have power, or if they themselves have enough power within a social structure or system to impose (enforce) their epistemological approach, enormous psychic and social problems may result.

What are the characteristics of hegemonial universalism and fundamentalist pluralism?

Hegemonial or absolute universalism

- Individual and social/societal characteristics, especially ideas, values and norms, are said to exist for all, for the whole world at any time and any place, and to be objectively true; in this sense, it is ahistorical;
- If there is a need for legitimation, it has recourse to axiomatic, unconditional, and thus immutable, notions such as God, nature, history, a specific book (the Bible, the Koran), reason or, the market – and the eternal or natural laws of these;
- Critical questions are not heard or allowed, either from within or from the outside;
- Compromises between different interests and claims aren’t possible, because they would be a sign of weakness or even cowardice; it’s a matter of all or nothing, victory or defeat;
- Any dissidence or deviation from universalist principles is an uncivilised, barbarian or criminal act against mankind, nature or God which mustn’t be tolerated and which confers not only the right, but also the moral duty to intervene, punish or persecute.

If the representatives of a hegemonial cultural universalism become allied with power holders in a social power structure, the latter becomes inquisitional, expansionist, colonialist, and they may become promoters of the idea of just wars etc. The ultimate result is a more or less absolute dictatorship. Furthermore,
in most cases, the postulated universalism has been – and in a sense still is – a
type of particularism. So the first declaration of independence (the Magna
Charta of 1215) “forgot”, that is, excluded, slaves and women; the declaration
of 1789 “forgot” women (hence the Declaration of the Rights of Woman of
1791 by Olympe de Gouges). In the nineteenth century, “forgotten” work-
ing class people without property or capital fought for social rights (Marshall
1992). In the twentieth century, the third world became an issue once people
realised that the particular vulnerability of children, women, migrant workers,
disabled or bisexual oriented individuals etc. had been ignored. One there-
fore faces the paradox that the proclaimed universalism of human rights was
hiding and promoting particularism in defence of particular interests, that is,
those of white men, adults, Western capitalism, transnational companies etc.
The axiomatic freedom of property cleared the path for the maximisation of
private property. Yet, even today, there has been no reflection or public debate
on the fact that, historically, the constitutional right to individual property
didn't mean the right to property for huge transnational corporations and their
CEOs without any democratic control (Bornschier 1983).

**Fundamentalist cultural contextualism/relativism**

- Ideas, values and norms **differ from individual to individual, family to family, con-
text to context, society to society**; therefore, it is impossible to find common
characteristics – values and norms – for all men, women, groups and
societies;

- **There is no objective truth;** truth is in the eye of the beholder, without any
“outside criteria”; thus it is completely subjectivistic;

- **Critical questions** from the standpoint of an outsider are not allowed;

- Every form of universalism, including the **search for compromise and especially
consensus, has to be criticised as hegemonial**; this implicitly means questioning
or even **negating democratic procedures**;

- **Relativistic pluralism is a guarantee of tolerance.** “Live and let live” is the
credo – which is in fact a credo of **tolerance as indifference.**

If the representatives of a fundamentalist **pluralism** ally themselves with **social
power holders**, the latter become unpredictable, particularistic and opportun-
istic. As a group, they develop a form of exclusive cultural identity politics
and partisanship which doesn't allow one to have empathy for other groups
or possibly join them in defending and fighting for a common cause and the
implementation of (human) rights (Fraser and Honneth 2003). This would
qualify as disloyalty. With its notions of “impartial tolerance” or “laissez-
faire”, fundamental cultural relativism or pluralism legitimises – implicitly or
explicitly – not only subjectivistic-arbitrary judgements and unquestioned
self-determination, but also free market-fundamentalism, blind, unrestricted
capital accumulation, and any form of culturally determined structural discrimination, oppression and violence – be it racism, sexism, ageism, classism, religious oppression etc. History has shown that cultural identities can easily be instrumentalised to exclude dissidents or foreigners and perpetrate hate crimes or promote religious, ethnic and secular wars of all kinds.

Furthermore, fundamentalist-pluralistic notions are – oddly enough – universalistic in a way, because they claim that diversity is axiomatically universal. This means that it is useless, or even impossible, to ask for common ideas, values and norms which could be generalised, especially in the case of values or norms pertaining to human dignity, social justice and human rights as a minimal consensual ethics that forms a basis for mankind and a world society in the making.

It follows that, like hegemonial universalism, fundamentalist cultural pluralism/relativism is also dogmatic and ethically conservative. Neither allows criticism, but for different reasons. Under these premises, intercultural understanding and dialogue are doomed to fail. Thus, one has to ask whether there is a possibility to escape this seemingly unavoidable trap. The first necessary insight is that there can be no refuge for an axiomatic universalism or pluralism which possesses the absolute truth. In a very general sense, one has to recognise that, if a debate and dialogue is to succeed, axiomatic, unquestionable pluralism or universalism that claims a superior objective or subjective truth which doesn't require empirical verification cannot be catered to. Both views present the danger of becoming inhuman: the first by implementing autocratically despotic rights, privileges, policies; the second by leaving factual injustices such as poverty, exploitation, racism, sexism, violence etc. – in short human rights violations – unquestioned as a given. One has to ask: Are there forms of universalism and pluralism which allow self- and mutual criticism? Are there forms of reflection which allow empirical judgements of injustice and human rights violations with reference to theories and values, thereby leaving room for change and amelioration? If so, what are the characteristics of an epistemological and interactional approach that would make it possible to seek common ground which could facilitate at least a partial consensus or compromise? I posit that there is such an approach, and call it moderate universalism and pluralism.

**Moderate, debatable universalism and pluralism:**

**What are their common characteristics?**

Firstly, “moderate” doesn’t mean replacing basic premises and beliefs with the “other” position. It does, however, demand a willingness to bring one’s hidden premises into the open and discuss them critically: Are they producing suffering through their consequences? Do they facilitate or even promote the construction of power structures which produce structural violence? Or do they ask for remembrance of the history of produced injustice and suffering
in one’s own context and organisations and acknowledgement of the traces of blood which the fight for human rights has left behind and still produces. There is no linear, chronological development of human rights, beginning with ancient philosophy and the books of the Bible, passing through struggles of the citizens of North America for independence from England and the French Revolution, and culminating in the UN Declaration of Human Rights of 1947 (Bielefeldt 2007: 43). Bielefeldt calls this very common argumentation an illegitimate “cultural-genetic claim” and describes it as an outstanding, unique product of Western thinking and civilisation. No country or continent has the right to claim human rights as its possession (Bielefeldt 2003).

Moderate universalism and pluralism will furthermore ask about the economic, social, political and cultural conditions which lead to human rights violations, in terms of both perpetrators and victims. Moderate positions have the following characterisation in common:

- They both start with descriptions of “what is”, of the actual situation, problems and conflicts – and especially of experiences of denigration, discrimination, violence etc. They proceed with a search for explanations of what could possibly determine them. What are their biological, psychic, social and cultural causes and consequences? This includes descriptions, explanations and ethical judgements of the values and norms of the relevant actors.

- Moderate positions must accept that these descriptions, explanations and valuations will be questioned, criticised, and possibly corrected by empirical evidence. This means that they can be revised in the face of new empirical evidence. And these descriptions, explanations and judgements can be questioned, criticised and revised in the face of new empirical evidence. Factual truth and factual falsity – full or partial – are attributes of propositions concerning facts. Moral truth refers to real facts, such as discrimination, oppression and exploitation, as does moral judgement in line with, for example, humanist, religious, Kantian, or Marxist ethics.

- Debatable or deliberative universalism and pluralism therefore accept the notion of the fallibility and ameliorability of one’s position. This occurs in a common learning process where human needs, interests, and human rights violations are articulated and claims are negotiated and legitimated in the light of values, norms and human rights.

- They allow the search for cooperation and consensus – which could also mean a consensus about dissent – or for a fair compromise referring to metanorms, for example, those pertaining to social justice.

- If this is not possible, the parties have to allow people to move out of an inhuman, repressive, exploitative social system (the exit option); in this case, there must be a social, and probably also economic, support system for those who take the exit option.
• In short, tolerance is not defined by indifference to or acceptance of any behaviour legitimised by cultural or religious tradition or political ideology, but by social respect in spite of (minor) moral differences and a clear demarcation of where tolerance has to end: no tolerance for human suffering, social injustice, or oppression; no tolerance for intolerance, or "zero tolerance for torture" (Forst 2003).

Moderate universalism follows the assumption that all individuals all over the world share the same biological, psychic and social/socio-cultural needs, and that this forms the base for the legitimisation of the universal dimension and foundation of human rights. And all human beings, without exception, are dependent on others in different ways for the satisfaction of these needs. This is the main cause of their vulnerability: it is possible for these "others" to deny the means for this satisfaction and/or to establish social rules which make this denial possible without being made responsible for it. The (partial) impossibility of satisfying one’s needs leads to serious health, psychic and social problems – in short, to human suffering. For each human need and corresponding violation, one could find at least one, but in most cases several human rights to protect it; and for each human right, one can postulate that it can protect at least one, but in most cases several human needs and prevent their violation. These considerations form the basis for the theoretical-ethical and philosophical legitimation of the universality of human rights.

Moderate pluralism shares the assumption that individuals don’t have the same wishes and preferences or use the same socio-cultural and symbolic resources and practices (or even follow the same sequence) to satisfy them. These are determined by socialisation, specific experiences and socio-economic and

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5 According to Werner Obrecht’s extensive research about human needs (2007), one can assume the following universal needs: Biological needs: physical integrity, the necessary "stuff" (oxygen, food etc.) for physical survival, sexual activity and procreation; psychic needs: sensory stimulation; aesthetic forms; psychic stimulation; information which is comprehensible, giving orientation and guidelines for action as elementary needs; the need for an understanding of what’s going on around oneself and with oneself; the need for subjective security; subjective relevant goals and the hope that they can be realised; effective competences/skills, rules and social norms to cope with a specific situation; the need to control one’s life situation and circumstances as complex needs, involving full self-consciousness. Social needs: emotional acceptance, love; to help spontaneously, socio-cultural membership in social systems; individual identity; social acceptance; exchange justice... The list is open-ended and can thus be supplemented. Needs shouldn’t be confused with wishes, the latter are culturally determined and have no saturation point!
socio-cultural context. Although human vulnerability and suffering are universal experiences, their expression and measures for coping with them are, for the most part, culturally determined. These notions form the basis for the contextual or pluralist foundation of human rights, which demands the consideration of context-specific factors for the implementation of these rights.

To summarise: Debatable or moderate universalism and pluralism might be a way out of the dilemma described above and its corresponding, often conflictive and fruitless, debates. Two examples serve to illustrate the relationship between universal needs and human rights:

In his autobiography The Long Way to Freedom, Nelson Mandela describes the impression the assemblies in his hometown made upon him as a boy: “Everybody could speak who wanted to speak. It was democracy in its purest form. There might have existed a hierarchy between the speakers...but everybody was heard, be it a chief or a simple man, a warrior or a medicine man, a shop owner or a labourer.” Sen comments on this quotation as follows: “The desire for democracy [the need for social membership, acceptance, participation and procedural social justice] – hasn’t been imposed upon Mandela by a coercing West. It has its roots in his particular living context, his African hometown and his personal experience in this context. And, paradoxically, he – and many others – have fought to coerce the West to accept democracy in South Africa. That Mandela was successful at the end of a very long, extremely painful battle and 27 years of prison, was the victory of humanism – and not of a specific European idea” (2007: 68). I would add that it was a universal need: women and men struggling to participate in and control the matters relevant for their daily life and to be freed from the discrimination, oppression, brutal violence and torture unambiguously legitimised in the constitution and by the laws and procedures of a white racist regime with a clear religious background and, consequently, unquestionable legitimation.

In 1955, the African National Congress (ANC) sent out fifty thousand volunteers to townships and the countryside to collect freedom demands from the people of South Africa. Demands such as “Land to be given to all landless people”, “Living wages and shorter hours of work”, “Free and compulsory education, irrespective of colour, race or nationality”, and “Peace and Friendship” were synthesised in a final document by ANC leaders with the Freedom Charter, which was officially adopted on 26 June 1955 at a Congress of The People in Kliptown/Soweto. The meeting was attended by approximately three thousand delegates, who had to make their way through police cordons. It was broken up by the police on the second day. The crowd shouted its approval of each section with cries of “Afrika!” and “Mayibuye”. Nelson Mandela only managed to escape the police by disguising himself as a milkman (his movements and interactions were restricted by banning orders at the time). After the Congress was denounced as treason, the South African government banned the ANC and arrested 156 activists, including Mandela (Joffe 2007). The Freedom Charter is seen as the foundation of South Africa’s 1996 Constitution. Here too, the cries and demands for freedom – freedom

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6 Nussbaum discusses this combination of universality and context-specificity in relation to the right to education, see Nussbaum 1999: 250–252.
from slavery, exploitation, persecution, torture, hunger etc. — were not imposed by the West as a big universal liberator. On the contrary — the West stabilised and protected the Apartheid regime in many ways, despite the UN boycott. The Charter is the result of life-long suffering, struggles and many traces of blood (Terreblanche 2002). The massive violation of basic human needs was at its roots. Freedom or liberty consists not only of “the power to do whatever is not injurious to others” (article 4 of the French Declaration of 1789); “liberty and justice consists of giving back all what belongs to others to the ones who are entitled to it” (as Olympe de Gouges reformulated in article 4 of her Declaration in 1791). This aspect of freedom still hasn’t been realised in South Africa.

Mutua’s sharp criticism (see above) leads him to suggest a truly universal platform and many local platforms which respect the contributions and criticism of different cultural representatives and which lead to cross-cultural contamination of cultural patterns in solving dilemmas and ethical incompatibilities (Mutua 2002: 7, Appiah 2006: 128–142, see also Menke and Pollmann 2007).

Social practice: An example of deliberative, moderate cultural pluralism and universalism and some guidelines for the social work profession

As I stated above, war is a human activity which violates almost every human right, regardless of whether it is legitimised by pseudo-universal secular categories such as “just wars” or by the misuse of cultural/religious/tribal identities to stigmatise, hate, exclude, persecute and destroy the members of other societal groups.

Imam Muhammed Nuayn Asbafa und Pastor James Movel Wuye (Nigeria)7 were fierce enemies during a long period of war between Christian and Muslim soldiers fighting for power over a specific region. In 2001, the parties came together in Kaduna for a peace agreement between eleven Islamic and eleven Christian leaders. This was the foundation of a Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, which offers mediation services for Muslims and Christians in conflict and social and economic support for widows and children who were victims of war. Their common credo, they said, was that real strength lies in respecting diversity, defined as religious diversity. In 2004, very serious conflicts once again arose between Muslims and Christians. Mass graves were found. It took five months of mediation to write a consensual peace declaration whereby each party accepted its share of guilt and indebtedness to the other.

Pastor Movel Wuye and Imam Muhammed Ashafa also reached a personal agreement “We stay together, whatever dissent comes up.” If one hurts the other with his claim of superior judgement, the next step is to say: “I need your help!” Separation is not possible if one of them doesn’t want to accept the victory of the stronger party. So, even if there is serious

disagreement — about the death penalty, for example — during working hours they still go together to the people for mediation and conflict resolution. But in the evening, instead of staying together, they write “messages” to each other and slip them under each other’s door... without saying good night or reconciling in a cheap, harmonising way. This agreement about a basic reciprocal dependency and the need for its mutual recognition, they say, unites them on what they call the common higher or meta-level of both religions, which is neither Christian nor Islamic.

Pastor James and Imam Ashafa have realised that if they stick to their different religious premises, conflict becomes irresolvable, because the laws of a religion as given by God, which both claim are a universal truth, are not negotiable. Such a constellation, combined with claims of power, leads to a logic of victory versus defeat. An alternative is to explicitly renounce to any form of superiority or axiomatic foundation. In this example, this took the form of a contract between almost equal partners. This was the start of the search for criteria which transcends this “contextual-religious blockage” but still respects the main and common ethical assumptions of both religions, including respect for the dignity of the other, social justice, support and cooperation.

Mutual understanding between universalists and contextualists in human rights issues would have to follow the following guidelines if their discourse is not to result in failure: First of all, it would have to start with some kind of consensus and, if possible, some form of “contract” adapted to the specific situation. Once this has been achieved, the following would have to be considered:

- Many, or even most, cultural conflicts between individuals and social groups/minorities etc. don’t have a religious or cultural, but a socio-structural base (getting power over others, their resources, land or property, minds, capacities etc.).
- The cultural code seems to provide the most accessible and plausible description and often also explanations for social conflicts, especially when politicians reinforce it through the culturalisation of socio-structural conflicts, such as those between classes, races, genders, and religious powers. Defining social and economic conflicts as religious or ethnic conflicts makes them mostly irresolvable; human rights (and their violation) have to be introduced as additional diagnostic criteria for the description of such conflicts.
- Every so-called cultural or ethnic conflict has to be analysed and explained separately in terms of its unique cultural (religious, ethnic or nationalistic) and socio-structural (socio-economic, political, strategic-military) dimensions, determinants and interrelations. Human rights violations also have to be explained, and not just subsumed under specific articles of the UN Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.
- Alleviation of human suffering, conflict resolution – positively defined as human well-being, liberation and social change as values and goals of social
work – must be combined with social assistance and help to the needy, that is, with the *fulfilment of social rights*.

- The values and norms for which one stands must pass an empirical test of the implications of their implementation for individuals and the social structure.
- Furthermore, concrete cooperation – daily working arrangements – is the empirical test for the values and norms one cherishes: How do one's values and norms effect cooperation, and what does this say about their fallibility/ameliorability? Conflict and blockages in cooperation should be overcome by mediation as well as empowering action lines.
- Instead of dismissing the dialogue when diverging, seemingly incompatible positions emerge and taking refuge to an absolute – cultural or religious – position by saying “to this point and no further”, the decisive sentence should be “I need your help to get clear about my blind spots and to solve the problem”. There is nothing shameful about the declaration “I need your help”, as long as the actors can keep control over the conditions and the content of help.
- This avowal is the basis for the search for an approach to thinking and action which begins with being able to articulate human needs as a new, transcending and, at the same time, common human reference point.

Finally, human rights give the profession of social work a chance to be more autonomous in its judgements and to end the seemingly endless debate about whether and how the profession could or should be political. According to its human rights mandate, it has to be political. Nevertheless, integrating human rights in its professional identity remains an enormous challenge. A quotation by Madhov Gore of Mumbay from the XIVth International Conference on Social Welfare of 1968 in Helsinki expands on this idea:

> [The human rights perspective] has the advantage of clarifying what the moorings and long-term objectives of social work are. It will disturb the complacence of the individual social worker who may be tempted to acquiesce in the values of the local community even when they conflict with the broader (values) of the profession. It will require and compel the organized profession to take clear positions on social issues...In the midst of a plurality of cultures and values there will be need for the affirmation of an acceptable common denominator. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides this necessary standard and direction to all constructive action (1969: 67–68).

As the above discussion has shown, one should add that, if social work wants to avoid the broadly criticised hegemonial form of universalism, it can’t speak of a “common denominator” without considering the premises and guidelines of a deliberative universalism or pluralism in its approach to human rights.
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Chapter 2

Justice versus Care – A Dilemma of Ethics

Ruth Großmaß

When discussing ethics in social work, it might be instructive to include a historical perspective because, while social work tends to be taken for granted in today’s western societies, from a historical perspective, it is something rather new, and historically, social work as a profession seems to be a “difference that makes a difference” – and this goes for the ethical dimension as well as for other aspects of social work. In spite of this, debates on ethics in social work, while underlining the continuity of helping in diverse societies, often fail to emphasise the special ethical demands related to professionalisation. Explaining, for example, social work’s principle of solidarity or the anthropological roots of “helping each other”, one refers to past institutions, such as “generosity” in the ancient world or “compassion” in the medieval world. And every human community does in fact develop institutions of social help and support for those who can’t care for themselves. Social work as a paid occupation, however, is something different. And although every social institution of help is based on some kind of moral demands, ethics in social work is a different matter. One has to consider the moral implications of a professionalised helping system which is based on an abstract form of solidarity and discuss what “social justice” can be with reference to a national welfare system or in a more global perspective. This chapter will feature a discussion of ethical dilemmas in professional social work, in particular those that pertain to the categories of justice and solidarity.

Ethics in social work

Unlike the helping systems of ancient and medieval societies, social work in modern societies is not a “natural” activity of social units to which both the care givers and the care receivers belong. Caring about each other is no longer based on “organic” obligations, but on an abstract principle of solidarity. Providing help for individuals who are in a situation of poverty or some other kind of need is no longer the provision of close relationships (families, neighbours, the religious community), but is now handled by the institutions
of the (welfare) state or international organisations. As far as the role of the individual helper is concerned, while it is true that social workers often have altruistic motives for entering this field of work, helping in modern societies is not an act of personal altruism, but a profession.

It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that this profession began to emerge. Social work has its origins in a particular, European situation characterised by serious economic and social transformations. Industrialisation was progressing at an exponential rate, in conjunction with colonialism and exploitation of what was later called the third world. At the same time, huge social problems were emerging inside the industrial societies: poverty, infant mortality, family disorders, unemployment etc., all of which indicate a loss of social cohesion and the erosion of social networks. Altruism and social caring didn't vanish; they were transformed. The middle class – and especially middle-class women – became concerned in a new way about the social problems that they read about in the newspapers: the obvious poverty in the streets and the overcrowded hospitals, workhouses and orphanages. In the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, there were a number of initiatives aimed at establishing social help for the poor, the ill, and for children who were hardly cared for; for people, that is, that those who cared didn't know personally. These transformations mark the beginning of social work. Today, the socio-cultural changes of which social work (among other things) is an outcome are discussed under the notion of modernisation. This sociological term describes a wide range of interconnected transformations which took place over a period of about two hundred years. Conditions in many parts of society changed; technological improvement, economic changes, class disturbances, social problems and initiatives to cope with them became central features of the nineteenth century, a period when primordial human bonds (family relations, relations of proximity and religion) began to loosen their grip on western society. Social work is an outcome of these transformations and, to an equal degree, of politically and morally motivated initiatives to solve the social problems that they caused.

From this theoretical point of view it becomes possible to explain why social inventions like social work are necessary for societies characterised by functional differentiation – to borrow a term from systems theory (Luhmann 1997). To a greater degree than past social systems, modern societies depend on the inclusion of the majority. Nevertheless, modern societies – and this is increasingly becoming a global problem – have a tendency to produce exclusion (Bude 2008, see also Ostheimer 2009: 63); as a result, societal investments – new systems like social work – become necessary.

To make this helping institution work, different interests and influences flow together: societal interests in minimising exclusion and enabling prosperity; the interest of the state in controlling deviants and preventing political unrest; citizens' desire to live in a just community and to safeguard their
Justice versus Care – A Dilemma of Ethics

personal property; social workers' interest in doing a good job and participating in power; and – last not least – the interest of the poor in getting support. Over the course of about a hundred years, professional social work as discussed here was developed: vocational training and, in a further step, academic education became necessary to turn helping into a modern profession. Only in the last thirty years has ethical reasoning been considered important for protecting the human dignity of both the client and the social worker. The relationship between socio-cultural transformations, the development of social work and its professionalisation, and ethics is – as one might guess – not a simple one.

When trying to understand this relationship and the un-simultaneousness of its development, it may be useful to sharpen one's awareness of the basic motives for altruism in general. From the individual point of view, helping other human beings in cases of emergency seems to be a "natural", anthropologically based reaction, or, psychologically speaking, altruism is founded on self-esteem and social confidence. To deny someone an act of altruism therefore implies a risk of shame and social isolation. This can be interpreted as a strong motive for worrying about social life conditions when a helping system begins to fail. From the community's point of view, helping and receiving help from community members is a necessary bond, safeguarding cooperation and social harmony. For a community, the erosion of social networks based on altruism implies the risk of political unrest and the weakening of economic power.

Although these risks to the individual and the community can be identified, they do not produce immediate effects. Regarding the risk to the individual, Bayertz (2004) has shown that the amoral position (that is, denying obligations to others) can be refuted in general, but not in reference to a given situation or an individual's behaviour. And with regard to the community, politicians have a tendency to regard caring and social networks as "natural" (as part of the female character, for example), and, consequently, as impervious to economic, social and cultural change. This may explain the historical fact that many times, severe social problems must occur before something is done to initiate new institutions of help. And it may explain why, at the beginning of social work, ethics was not a subject of debate, but was regarded as a matter of course. Social caring, on the other hand, is neither ahistorical nor a matter of course.

Once social work is established, the conditions of caring change, as do the duties of and within the helping system. Charitable organisations and governmental departments are now the protagonists of social work; diverse and often contradictory interests take effect, and cannot be balanced by the individual actor's risk of shame and social isolation. The welfare state is now obligated to provide help in cases of emergency and poverty and to control the egoistic interests of the persons and organisations involved. In developed
democracies, social work should support those who are its clients without damaging their status as citizens. It follows that standards of social work have to be established, with social justice and participation becoming the criteria to be applied. For the social worker, doing a good job now includes controlling his/her impulse to exercise power. And in doing this job – as if it weren't enough already – public resources are to be used sparingly. The individual's moral intuition is not a sufficient instrument for coping with these demands, even if we assume that the social worker's intuition is well developed.

Ethical reasoning in social work isn't just a commitment to some moral values; it is more than talking about ethical standards and good practice, and involves more than reconciling a professional decision with one's conscience. Ethical reasoning has to keep in mind the special characteristics of social work as a profession that takes place within a pluralistic society characterised by a variety of ideas about how to live a good life, as well as moral pluralism and a high standard of personal rights. Nor must it be overlooked that social workers intervene – in accordance with civil law – in their clients' personal affairs and life situations. To find the right course of action in this field, social workers have to seek a balance between the particularity of each human being's personal rights and the generalised values formulated in laws, human rights declarations and the idea of social inclusion. This implies that every single intervention has to be based not only on scientific knowledge and professional methods, but on an ethically reflected decision as well.

Ethical reasoning in this sense is no simple task, because it often includes decisions about severe conflicts and dilemmas. The client may have moral values quite different from those that the social worker feels are important; he or she may insist on practices which are destructive or violating. Guidelines established by law may be unfair to some clients, and social work agencies may provide conditions which lead to conflicts between the client's needs and the principle of economic efficiency. From a global perspective, social work is no longer limited to the – generally affluent – western societies, but operates internationally, often in confrontation with autocratic governmental structures and always against a wide variety of social problems, both factors which threaten the standards of social care. Consequently, ethical reasoning in social work needs a theoretical background and transparent criteria for reflection on professional decisions. When searching for a rationale enabling a structured approach to ethical reasoning in social work, social work refers to political and moral philosophy because it offers a third position (equally close to and distant from science and everyday thinking [Brumlik 1995: 13]) and a rich pool of theories and argumentations in ethics.\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1} Yet philosophy is not meant to be outside socio-political power and economical interests. Philosophy provides – logically – a third position for understanding the world.
Justice and social caring – a delicate relationship

In today’s world, when social workers enter philosophical discourse, they expect to find answers to the ethical dilemmas which occur in social work practice. For example, the following questions arise when practitioners discuss ethical problems of social work on a more general level: How can we manage to provide an even-handed treatment for all clients? Do empowerment and caring go together? How can social workers achieve fair treatment for their clients in the context of bureaucratic agencies? How can a person be respected as a citizen (holding the same position in the public sphere as the social worker himself/herself) and as someone who needs help? Is the state able to provide welfare to its citizens without closing its borders? Is it possible to define standards of social care that can be adhered to globally? And what is required to establish social welfare and justice?2

Questions like these concern issues of justice, caring, responsibility and recognition, which are discussed in moral and political philosophy. One finds elaborate theories of fairness and justice, the most important of which are linked to the name John Rawls (1999). Martha Nussbaum conceptualises a left Aristotelian theory of social justice, which tries to include ideas about human needs (Nussbaum and Sen 1993, Nussbaum 2003). There are ideas about human cooperation as the basis of a well-functioning community that underline the importance of mutual support (Walzer 1983, 1990). There is harsh criticism of the modern identity concept as entailing social isolation (MacIntyre 1981, Taylor 1989). Theories of compassion based on traditional Schopenhauerian ideas3 or – like Judith Butler in her recent publications (2004) – based on the recognition of a shared human precariousness can also be found. Some philosophers offer theories conceptualising communication as a medium for finding accepted rules and norms (Habermas 1981, 1983), while others prefer recognition as a point of departure for moral theory (Honneth 1994, Ricœur 2004. Nancy Fraser (Fraser and Honneth 1998, Fraser 2000) tried to combine the idea of recognition with claims for egalitarian redistribution). And beginning in the 1980s, theories of care and social support begin to appear (Ruddick 1989, Tronto 1993, Noddings 2002)4. So the pool of philosophical knowledge concerning issues that are of interest to social work is indeed rich, and social workers looking for answers to the ethical questions that they encounter are sure to find what they’re looking for.

But, studying philosophical theory thoroughly and with an interest in getting answers to the questions that they have to deal with, social workers

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2 Ethical debates with students of social work often lead to these questions.
3 This discourse is not an extensive one. I refer German-speaking colleagues to Henning Ritter’s essay (2004).
4 For a more differentiated discussion of this subject, see Conradi 2001, Großmaß 2006.
don’t find solutions, but rather experience irritation. There seems to be a tension between theorising issues of justice and issues that concern human needs, close relationships and the obligation of caring for each other. As soon as one leaves the philosophy of the ancient and medieval world and approaches modernity, moral philosophy itself seems to become entangled in dilemma structures. When studying the theories listed above, one has to realise that philosophy offers two types of theory.

One type of moral or political philosophy is concerned with questions of how to construct a just or fair society. Authors like Rawls and Nussbaum discuss principles and rules which can regulate a liberal and just society, creating the opportunity for every citizen to realise his/her personal interest and to participate in social life. Although well aware of the fact that human beings are born and have to die, that is, that they have to be brought up and cared for, the point of view of philosophers working on this type of theory is that of the citizen: fully grown, sound in mind and body (except for cases of illness, for which provisions are made), capable of and interested in communication and cooperation. While these debates are no longer limited to male philosophers, this does seem to be a male/liberalistic type of theory.

The other type of theory is concerned with issues of caring and solidarity. Like liberalistic authors, authors such as Taylor and MacIntyre are also interested in universalistic social theory, but their point of departure is the issue of solidarity. They look for relationships which produce a sense of community. Human beings are not conceptualised as individuals interacting as individual persons, but as people living institutionalised social relationships (Honneth 2008 et al.: 13). The (mainly female) theorists working on an ethics of care focus on the more concrete situation of caring, which includes thinking of human beings above all as vulnerable beings who are (temporarily) care givers and (temporarily, but definitely at the beginning and the end of their life) care takers.

These two types of philosophy rarely go together5. What are the socio-historical and the theoretical problems behind this dualism? Two reasons can be cited for the socio-historical aspect of this dualism. Firstly, the challenge which philosophy had to face at the beginning of the modern age must be mentioned: The topics of state and society were secularised, and great significance was attached to universalistic concepts of community (without reference to religion). This, combined with the general male bias of western philosophy (which lasted until the twentieth century and still persists in some disciplines), caused topics from the sphere of personal life and close relation-

5 The (very differentiated) debate between Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser (1998), despite the fact that both are really interested in clarifying issues of recognition and justice, is not coming to a satisfying end because of the fact that Honneth’s point of departure is an individualistic concept while Fraser’s is a community-orientated one.
ships, which, from the perspective of complementary gender relations, were thought to be female, to be degraded. Feminist thinking revealed this bias over the last thirty years.6

In the context of the questions posed in this paper, it’s the theoretical problem underlying this phenomenon which might be more interesting to look at. Analysing the dualism of justice and care from a theoretical point of view, one finds two different perspectives which – it would seem – cannot be engaged at the same time: Reflections on justice, fairness and human rights think of human beings mainly as equal, cooperating as peers, while reflections on care and solidarity think of human beings mainly as living asymmetrical relationships. Perhaps it would be wise to take a moment to understand the theoretical sense of these two ways to conceptualise human beings and human existence.

Cooperation and justice depend on the idea of reciprocity, which implies that any person one can think of is imagined as someone who is capable of judgement (he/she is able to decide what is right and wrong), capable of negotiation (he/she puts his/her own needs and interests in relation to those of others), and capable of communication7. Capabilities like those mentioned in the philosophical discourse of the eighteenth century are implied by the notion of “reason”. Here, it is necessary to emphasise that “reason” was understood neither as an empirical condition for participating in humanity8 nor as an empirical description of what human beings are like. Equality, linked to the capabilities listed above, has to be understood as a regulative idea – which is what it is called in philosophical terminology – or – as I prefer to call it – as a fiction necessary to give social life in human communities a chance. Thinking about individual human rights, about, for example, the right to an education or the right to decide about one’s life, requires a vision of citizenship which everybody can realise just by being a human being.

On the other hand, all ideas about social support, social care and help only make sense if we presume differences between persons. People have diverse needs, and, apart from this, the helping situation itself is characterised by a structural difference: There is always somebody in need of something, and there is always somebody else who has resources at his/her disposal which enable him/her to help. The philosophical arguments used to justify a general

6 There is an enormous body of literature about this subject. See, for example, Fox Keller 1985, 1996; Schmerl and Großmaß 1996.

7 While this is reminiscent of the rational male subject, which was the unspoken prerequisite of Enlightenment philosophy, it is in fact much less: judgement, negotiation and communication in this context are not idealised characteristics of a bourgeois personality, but the conditions for a dialog which to some extent can be called free (see, for example, Habermas 1981, 1983).

8 This is an idea of some utilitarian thinkers of the twentieth century who do not deal with justice.
duty to provide or entitlement to receive support refer to the differences caused by the **natural bodily constitution** which is the condition of human existence: birth, growing up, illness, disability, growing old, dying. These physical characteristics of human existence produce for every individual, at some point in his/her life, situations in which one person needs help, assistance and support from another person who definitely is not in a situation of need himself/herself. Consequently, philosophical theory assumes that an asymmetrical relationship is the logical foundation of solidarity in human society. The **idea of mutuality** which often accompanies the notion of solidarity is a very *abstract* one. Solidarity is mutual in so far as every human being experiences situations of need and nearly every human being experiences situations in which he or she provides assistance. Actual situations of care giving and care receiving, however, are always structured asymmetrically.

Summarising what has been said up to this point, the following thesis can be formulated: Although human societies undoubtedly need both justice and solidarity, it is difficult to consider both aspects at the same time; this, however, seems to be exactly the business of social work. In my view, this theoretical dilemma cannot be resolved – both perspectives are necessary, but they don't go together.

**Approaches to the problem**

There have of course been philosophical attempts to construct theories which avoid the problems outlined above. Some have already been mentioned. But these theories produce problems which, in my view, are even more serious. They try to avoid the delicate relation between justice and care by using a different notion of justice. Due to communitarism, justice is not imagined as something which should exist between individuals, but as a quality of the community as a whole, enabling a good life for its members. To make this comprehensible, the community is conceived as being based on some kind of constitutive relationships. The models for these relationships on which a good life should be based are motherhood, neighbourhood, and the cooperation that takes place in situations of danger or natural catastrophes. Taking this as a point of departure for the construction of a general social theory implies the assumption that unequal relationships are fundamental to human societies and almost part of human nature. The problems connected with this concept are obvious: The demands of the collective are of higher priority than those of the individual, and differences between men and women, old and young, persons with high responsibility and persons with less responsibility etc. can easily be transformed into different social positions and unequal rights.

So perhaps it would be better to return to the problems connected with the incompatibility of the perspectives of justice and solidarity described
Justice versus Care – A Dilemma of Ethics

above. Even if, as I contend, they are irresolvable, a way of coping with them can perhaps be found.

The philosophical discussion opens two directions for handling the dilemma structure. The first way can be used when one intends to analyse social situations; it's a more theoretical approach, and is based on the idea that a general incompatibility might be dissolved when an individual situation has to be understood. Each social situation can be analysed twice, from the perspective of justice and equality and from the perspective of the asymmetry of caring.9 The results of these two operations can lead to a better understanding of the situation, one which respects both aspects.

The second way – this one is more important for social work – refers to social practice and acting and is based on the introduction of a third category: recognition (German: *Anerkennung*, French: *reconnaissance*). Some of the most important authors to elaborate philosophical theories concerning this notion include Nancy Fraser (1997), Axel Honneth (1994) and Paul Ricœur (2004).

Emphasising “recognition” as a central category of moral philosophy can provide a hint on how to cope with the problems connected to the perspectives of justice and care. Recognition requires one to maintain respect for the personal rights of those who are being cared for and, conversely, to keep in mind human vulnerability when speaking of rights, justice and equality. It implies the knowledge that human beings possess both characteristics: equal citizenship and the vulnerability which is the consequence of natural bodily constitution. Equality and difference are general attributes of humanity.

As an abstract phrase, claiming respect and recognition for every human being meets, I assume, with general approval. But recognition doesn’t resolve the dilemma of justice and care; it still is not possible to take up both perspectives at the same time. “Recognition” can only help to handle it. The question which must now be asked is How can recognition can be practised in social work?

**Handling the ethical dilemma of justice and care**

When transferring the philosophical category of recognition to the field of social work, its full meaning must be clarified in order to understand the moral challenges that one faces when trying to practise recognition.

One challenge concerns thinking, conceptions and theories of social work. It is connected to questions like: How can difference be conceptualised if one is occupied with the struggle for justice and equality? How can equality be conceptualised if one is occupied with caring, that is, with acting in asymmetrical relationships? On an abstract level, Gestalt psychology points in the direc-

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9 For the feminist discussion, this was proposed by Carol Hagemann-White (1993) and more generally outlined by Martina Herrmann (1999).
tion of an answer. The figure-ground differentiation can be used: focusing on one perspective, with the other serving as a background which shapes aspects of what is to be done. Thinking about methods of social care, those which best respect human equality will be chosen. Discussing ways of just participation, those which take human vulnerability into account will be favoured. Recognition characterises a general mental attitude towards physical, psychological, social and cultural differences, a special kind of open-mindedness which expects differences without knowing them in advance. Recognition, however, is not just esteem for differences in whatever form they occur: differences may be cultural or ethnic, leading (within a dominant culture) to social injustice; differences may also result directly from injustice and poverty. In the first case, recognition is required, but it is inseparably linked with revealing social injustice. In the second case, recognition would be misleading. The mere addition of “universal respect for shared humanity” and “esteem for cultural distinctiveness” (Fraser 2000: 2) is therefore not a sufficient concept for political action and social work; the interlinking of cultural distinctiveness, power and social exclusion must also be taken into account.

Nor should recognition be equated with identity politics (ibid.). Identity politics is a powerful instrument in historical situations where suppressed groups begin to organise themselves; it provides “some genuine insights into the psychological effects of racism, sexism, colonization and cultural imperialism” (ibid.: 2) and gives suppressed social groups a chance to enter the public sphere. On the other hand, identity politics has a tendency to produce essentialism, as it “encourages both the reification of group identities and the displacement of redistribution” (ibid.) as soon as it is used as a general concept of interaction with others. Differences which prevent or reduce full participation in social life cannot be “recognised”, but must be criticised – not as characteristics of the persons concerned, but as qualities of the social institutions.

The other moral challenge of recognition concerns direct interaction with the client and is connected to the question How can we express recognition and respect while giving support? This concerns the manner in which support is given, how the other person is addressed, and how communication is constructed. Interaction – especially when it takes place within an asymmetrical relationship – should be characterised by equitable communication. At the same time, interaction – especially when it takes place within a relationship that focuses on equality and justice – should be accompanied by respect for the limits and vulnerability of the persons involved. When looking for a rationale enabling a structured approach to ethical reasoning in this field of

\[\text{In the German-language discourse, } \text{Differenz and Verschiedenheit are used to describe the problem (Rommelspacher 2003: 70–72).}\]
social work, it is necessary to look at the “ethic of care”, a concept which appeared in the 1980s.

The theoretical framework of care ethics was mainly produced by feminist theorists trying to reformulate and rethink those aspects of ethics ignored or degraded by mainstream (western) philosophy. Carol Gilligan’s criticism (1982) of Kohlberg’s concept of moral development (which defines the universal ethical principle orientation as the highest level of morality) was the starting point of a discussion about moral principles and the question of whether or not there is a gender difference regarding morality. While Gilligan highlights a general female attitude towards moral decisions, described as a “language of care” (women weaving their own interests together with those of others), the ensuing feminist discussions concentrated on social practice like mothering and nursing as sources of morality, practices which are mainly part of female life situations and seldom part of male life situations. Virginia Held (1993), for example, views the asymmetric relationship between a mother and a small child as paradigmatic. Sarah Ruddick (1989) prefers “maternal thinking” as a point of departure, and develops an ethic of “attentive love” (a metavirtue which is understood as both cognitive and affective). Last but not least, Nel Noddings (2002) emphasises that the domestic arena as a whole is the origin of caring competences and relational ethics. Although these theories don’t assume biological gender relations, the criticism voiced about communitarism – that justice is not understood as fairness concerning individual persons – has to be repeated here. These ethics are engaged in issues of justice mainly with regard to a fair recognition of female contributions to social life. Reification of asymmetrical relationships seems to be suggested whenever “natural” relationships are used as model for caring and nursing in modern societies.

Joan Tronto (1993) avoids this trap. She starts her investigation with a critical view on modern societies, where caring is a “marginal aspect” (ibid.: 122) and “does not function in an egalitarian manner” (ibid.: 116). Privileged persons, who can pay for the care they need, never are in the position of caregivers. Patterns of subordination are maintained and reinforced by the established system of care. There is something severely unfair in the way caring is organised, and this aspect has to be considered anytime an ethic of care is discussed. Providing care in an adequate manner is an essential task of society; and participating in caring activities is a moral demand for all persons. To understand the complexities of care as a practice, one has to take into account the decisions and judgements which are part of this practice. Tronto describes four elements of care: “Caring about, noticing the need to care in the first place; taking care, assuming responsibility for care; care-giving, the actual work of care that needs to be done; and care-receiving, the response of that which is cared for to the care” (ibid.: 127). Every step of this process has its own ethical element of care: “caring about” requires attentiveness; “taking care”
requires responsibility; doing the work of care ("care-giving") requires competence; and "care-receiving" requires responsiveness. And at every step of the caring process, moral failings are possible. Ignorance of the demands of caring that one encounters in one's life is a moral failing; a lack of responsibility is a moral failing; acting without competence or not using one's competence is a moral failing; refusing a response to the care received, or not taking seriously the response received, is a moral failing.

The possibility to act morally in all dimensions of the process of caring is not only a question of individual ethics; it is a question of knowledge and education, as well as a question of political transparency. The ethic described by Tronto is therefore not a set of rules and principles that the individual social worker can follow to ensure that he or she behaves in a morally correct manner while fulfilling the duties of his/her job. It is in fact more than that: it is a framework allowing a precise analysis of social practice and instructing professional supervision. Tronto's ethic focuses on neither professional nor private caring, but rather highlights the needs for caring and the responsibility to do the work of caring. This is the condition for including issues of justice in considerations of care and for promoting an egalitarian approach to social caring. To give an example, Tronto discusses how the professional is not in every case the one who has to do the work of caring ("care-giving", the third element of the caring process); there may be a person in the private surrounding who should "care about", in which case the professional's job may be to ask him or her to take responsibility.

Looking back at the question from which this discussion began, it should be noted that the dilemma of justice and care still is not resolved. Professional social work has to cope with the dilemmatic structure of ethics by considering both sides: Caring always includes an asymmetrical relationship, but the asymmetry is limited to the act of assistance, and this limit can be expressed. The four elements in Joan Tronto's ethics of care show how this can be done. But this is only a valid mode of handling the problem as long as social work is performed within a framework of social justice – which, as social workers realise all too often, cannot be assumed. Justice must therefore be considered as well, without the possibility of dissolving the problem in principle. Social work demands that responsible choices be made in every single professional situation. In some cases, the correct decision may be that resource-orientated help will do the job; sometimes empowerment might be the concept of choice; sometimes social advocacy is necessary, and sometimes political action.

On the theoretical level, recognition seems to be a way to handle the problems deriving from the dilemma structure of social caring in modern societies. We often hear it mentioned when ethics of social work are discussed. However, declaration is not enough, and practising recognition in professional contexts is not a natural element of individual morality. The deliberations presented above constitute an attempt to explain the complexity
of the moral category of “recognition”. And as far as I can see, a very clear understanding of how “recognition” works within practical social work has yet to be achieved; the concept still has to be worked out in greater detail, and in relation to the theory and methods of social work. Social workers are able to achieve what is meant by the moral category of “recognition”, but it has to be learned. And this learning should be part of academic education and vocational training.

References


Chapter 3

Ethical Learning and Ethical Deliberation in Social Work

Remembering some aspects of the pragmatist approach of social ethics

Maria Maiss

The growing need for joint ethical discussion, consideration and decision-finding processes in social work practice

Ethical awareness is a fundamental part and an essential aspect of the quality of professional social work practice, since, generally speaking, both ethics and social work deal with what can be called the arrangement of the “space between” oneself and other humans and between humans and animals/nature. Ethics deals with the question of how diverse human beings in different life situations can decide, act and live in a good, caring, just and responsible way with themselves, other humans, other species and nature.

Since the level of education on the subject of ethics differs among countries and among social work study programmes, it is possible to assume that many social workers are left with a code of ethics\(^1\) – a catalogue of highly differentiated ethical principles and values – which seems to demand a heroic mentality, and with the reality that this code of ethics may contain conflicting information. The conflicts inherent in ethical statements such as the code of ethics of the IASSW or of the IFSW can be summarised in the basic conflict that arises from the fact that, on the one hand, professional social work is supposed to promote well-being, social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients (individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities), in line with the idea of human rights work and social justice and that, on the other hand, it deals with the administrative aspects of managing the social problems and social outsiders produced by society and its reductionist symbols, structures and values, which discriminate against diversity and consequently exclude people from well-being.

In her/his daily work, the social worker is acutely aware of a gap between an ethical requirement as such and the inherent necessities within her/his specific practical field. When facing overwhelming and conflicting ethical demands, social workers are often left to fend for themselves, in most institutions\(^2\), forums, ...

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1 No unanimous consent exists within the profession as to whether the code of ethics is binding and how it should be applied.

2 This is certainly the case in my country (Austria).
which would facilitate exchange, joint reflection and problem-solving related to the profession and individual cases are still lacking. At best, psychological supervision is provided. In practice contexts such as prison and psychiatry, where the dignity and freedom of clients is not only more endangered, but also reduced, the gap between accountability to the individual client and to the professional association and the law may lead to an extremely painful experience for the morally aware social worker. Taking into account the limited scope of social work services in such institutions and the long-term nature of struggles for structural and organisational reforms, social workers usually lack the time and financial resources – and consequently, in many cases, the motivation – to engage in reformatory efforts within their working hours.

Furthermore, professional social workers who lack a necessary degree of critical awareness or the power and space to reflect on their position have to search for another way to manage or live with the contradictions inherent in the profession.

A widely used strategy is to avoid difficult situations and difficult users of social work services by referring them to colleagues or other services and to follow the professional duty or virtue of caring for oneself in order to be able to provide appropriate services in the long run. Often the pragmatic argument of system-based shortages affecting time, money or staff is hastily used in order to justify such decisions. Besides the unconscious strategy of “using” a so-called psychic defence mechanism in order to cope with overwhelming demands/situations, too many social workers run the risk of ignoring or repressing their critical awareness, and slowly become more and more a part of an administrative or socio-technical machinery that is supposed to be able to administrate social problems effectively.

For example, a widespread strategy in the profession of social work is the design of customised efficiency studies on the effectiveness of social work services, social diagnostics, and surveys of demand. The data collected by these studies is such that it ensures that the results will guarantee future demand and the transfer of daily rates, thus guaranteeing the perpetuation of social work provision. This ultimately results in a “vote of confidence” for a social work service system that allocates individuals seeking help to existing provisions instead of taking their real requirements as a starting point for providing flexible, custom-fit support services. Consequently, many social workers fail to consistently follow the quality principle of social work, namely that the provision of a supportive service is to be such that the service in question will become superfluous after a limited time. This could be achieved by devising a service that would meet the requirements of the service user by focusing on his/her resources and strengths.

3 Because they rely on the novella of laws and attention to safety regulations is dominant.
An alternative to ways of dealing with the inherent conflicts of professional social work which entail a variety of mostly subtle forms of misuse of power, especially to the detriment of highly vulnerable service users, is to stay, to the greatest possible degree, permanently aware of the conflicting logics and values implied by the so-called immediate and mediate qualities of social work.

The first means awareness of the inherent worth, difference and individuality of each person. It focuses on opening the development of strengths for self-determination, (self-) confidence, empowerment and participation in an interactive personal process between the social worker and the user of social work services within diverse social spaces. It requires one to respect that personal development and change depend on the individual's psychological time, dynamics, strategies of coping and resistance, as well as on the special resources and resilience a user of social work services has. And it demands an awareness of how a social worker's personality is a key medium that can enable or hinder the growth of personal development, (self-) confidence, self-determination, empowerment and participation on the part of the client.

The mediate quality of social work means intervening primarily through pragmatic values and logics originating outside the social work system, for example in the managerial-economic, socio-technical, or legal fields. Since the possibility of work in line with the immediate value is always a result of a political and personal struggle for freedom and self-determination, social work implies the ongoing task of handling given contradictions between conflicting spheres of power and knowing that these conflicts cannot be totally removed.

Understanding social work as dealing with contradictions in order to strengthen the social conditions for the immediate quality of social work implies the need to practice an ongoing democratic dialogue between diverse, different powerful spheres which directly or indirectly influence the social work system: the viewpoints of politicians, society in all its diversity, current and potential users of social work services and their affiliated groups, social workers in the field, social work scientists and the social economy.

The question of how to influence the kind of quality and ethical values in professional social work applies to society as a whole (national and global), since the social reasons for social problems and social exclusion are produced in a network in which everybody is involved, everybody must therefore be seen or see themselves as a potential user of social work services. Since individual development and well-being are inextricably tied to social development, individualistic morality must give way to social morality, as noted by Jane Addams, one of the original theorists of American pragmatism and social work.

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The shortcomings of social work in handling ethical responsibilities touch upon the intrapersonal depths of the helper’s motivation and the professional self-conception of social work at large. In order to achieve the aim of making the complex ethical implications of social work services adequately known, and thereby creating a space in which they may be shaped, ethical codices and manuals are insufficient. Relying solely on ethical codices and stipulated principles and standards can contribute to a moral overload and, especially in cases where the codices are very explicitly and hermetically formulated, can lead to a gradual constriction of the protagonists’ moral autonomy. For a rigid adherence to rules, a literal action alignment with the aid of an ethical checklist is the exact opposite of the fundamental idea of social work ethics which can be described as a constant ethical deliberation process at work. As a constant process, it cannot be delegated to “ethics experts”, but has to be undertaken by social workers themselves. In order to achieve this target, social workers need more than a general knowledge of moral orientation; they also require ethical reflection competence: the ability to constantly refine the ethical faculty of judgment in its aesthetic, emotional and cognitive aspects.

Only once these prerequisites are met do joint ethical discussion, consideration and decision-finding processes, for instance in ethical committees, ethical case discussions, or ethical supervisions, become possible. By interrupting well-trodden routines through ethical reflection and co-founding new perspectives, these joint deliberative platforms do not constitute an alternative to self-dependent ethical decision-making. They can, however, offer support and assistance: the struggle for an ethically beneficial, just and reasonable substantiation for a decision can be supported by analyses and discussions of complex problem areas or dilemmas involving diverse perspectives. Allowing discursive room and time for critical and constructive reflection on ethical commitments in social work practice should no longer be left to chance. On the contrary, these platforms have to be implemented in the daily routines, and hence in the organisational structure, of social work institutions.

On the one hand, ethical reflection requires the ability for ethical self-reflection, that is, constant critical reflection on one’s own normative value and judgment patterns which primarily affect decisions implicitly. Reflecting on acquired values can make one aware of the influences they exert and thus reduce the danger of uncritically transferring them to others. On the other hand, ethical reflection is considered as critical reflection on varied moral orientations and normative implications, “which are virtually inherent in the individual forms of professional activities, both institutional intervention types (social services,
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the public authorities, independent charities) and the structural framework (social law, social protection system) of social work” (Lob-Hüdepohl 2007: 118).

It follows that ethical considerations within the field of social work do not solely concern the promotion of the clients’ wellbeing, but also the social workers’ wellbeing and personal responsibility. The ability to take care of oneself is a decisive precondition for the efficient organisation of relationships and activities within social work settings. A number of questions arise in this context: How does one deal with material goods, values, attitudes and manners in a responsible, ethically just and self-determined lifestyle? How can one shape asymmetric relationships in a respectful way, especially in the case of increased vulnerability and dependency? These psychological questions are, at the same time, ethical questions.

Ilse Arlt, the Austrian pioneer of science-based social work, describes two central foci of ethical social work:

*Joy of life* is an important focus for help. It is the criteria, the ultimate goal, rather than the simple reduction of suffering. The second focus is called *service in return* – not for payment, but for preventing humiliation by giving the client the opportunity to give back in some way (Arlt 1958: 38).

This quotation clarifies that pondering ethical questions and ethical decision making in social work do not only take place within the scope of prescribed ethical discourses between staff members, providers of social work institutions, politicians supporting social programs and civil society, but also include the positions and the points of view of the users of social work services.

Following the principle of user-involvement is not only essential from an epistemological point of view; it is also a crucial element in the ethically responsible professional decision making and reasoning process that should emerge from a dialogical process involving the social worker and the client.

Another reason why comprehensive ethical judgment and action competence is required of social workers lies in the fact that many problems and crises, that are relevant to social work are closely related to moral conflicts and problems stemming from a reorganisation or reconstruction of value systems. This is especially true of societies characterised by a plurality of values.

A closer look at the beginnings of social work reveals that there is nothing new about these arguments for the structural implementation of a culture of individual and joint ethical deliberation in the daily routine of social work.

In this context, a reappraisal of Jane Addams’ theories is especially rewarding, since Jane Addams developed and tested her conception of social ethics in interconnection with the regulative idea of participative democracy.
The following chapters contain an investigation of the extent to which the pragmatist approaches to social ethics and the concept of participative democracy of John Dewey and Jane Addams and the latter’s method of repeated perplexity can provide guidance (1) for continually reflecting and cultivating morality/ethical values and (2) for implementing the described ethical dialogue in order to foster a more democratic process of (re-)defining the ethical dimensions together with the core quality criteria of social work, wherein both the knowledge that comes with experience and the experiences of service users would be taken into consideration.

“Dewey’s social ethics was developed through dialogue with Addams and often provide explanations which complement hers”

Addams’ theory of social ethics was developed through her activities at the Hull House Settlement, in an intellectual sphere rooted in social Christian idealism and spirituality and influenced by thinkers such as Edward Caird, the deist Ralph Waldo Emerson, the social reformer Leonid Tolstoy, and by different aspects of the evolving American school of thought known as pragmatism. In particular, there was a close mutual philosophical interaction between Jane Addams and John Dewey. At the time of their first meeting in 1892, which took place when Dewey responded to an invitation to visit Hull House for a discussion, Dewey was not yet a pragmatist, although he had begun to move in that direction (Knight 2005: 258).

In 1894, Dewey took a position at the recently founded University of Chicago. During his years in Chicago, Dewey’s early idealism gave way to an empirically based theory of knowledge that was in concert with an emerging school of thought known as pragmatism. He had already published his Essay on the Ethics of Democracy (1888) and a textbook entitled Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics (1891), and was increasingly interested in the role of ethics in everyday life. Therefore his visits to Hull House and his intensive discussions with Addams’ ideas came at an important juncture. Addams supported Dewey’s laboratory school at Chicago, where he had the opportunity to apply ideas he was developing to pedagogical methods. This experience provided the material for his first major work on education, The School and Society (1899).

In her biography on Jane Addams, Louise W. Knight writes:

Dewey was the more complete intellectual, of course, the truer philosopher. He would remain a professor all his life and organize his life around scholarly pursuits. And Addams was on her way to becoming the more complete social activist, the truer experimenter; having started a settlement house, she would remain “in the trenches” and organize her life

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8 Haddock Seigfried 2002: xiii.
around her commitment to social reform. But this difference in career choice was almost incidental, since each was powerfully drawn to what the other pursued most intently (Knight 2005: 240).

As Knight points out, it is not very clear which of the two influenced the other, or in which aspects: “The influence of the two friends on each other was profound, and, in many of its various parts, untraceable to one party or the other. As the years passed, it was not Dewey who influenced Addams or Addams who influenced Dewey as much as the friendship that influenced them both” (ibid: 240).

Originally influenced by a social Christian spirit, the two thinkers anchored their ethical position in the idea of evolution (which was a central intellectual trope of the nineteenth century) and in the idea that historically, antagonism can be useful in enabling a society’s ethics to move forward. They pointed out that ethics changes as society changes, and that certain ethical positions (Addams uses the example of the ethics of benevolence) must be left behind because societal experience (such as the Pullman Strike, see below) has rendered them irrelevant. Both Addams and Dewey developed their ethical positions under the pressure of experience: their ethics changed in line with the very process that pragmatism outlined in theory.

In order to clarify some epistemological preconditions that are inherent in Addams’ considerations of the interrelation between social ethics and participative democracy, a brief discussion of John Dewey’s conception of ethics and its ties to his pragmatist epistemology and of his understanding of participative democratic socialisation is in order. He formulated comparable content, a part of which is later than Addams’ work, but in a more systematic way than Addams, who was using a more contextual, descriptive and narrative style to illustrate her theoretical thoughts and to show how they evolved out of concrete social problems she encountered within her everyday life in the settlement and her political social activism.

The meaning of ethics in John Dewey’s pragmatist epistemology,
or Why are shared activities socially intelligent?

Dewey perceives organic adaptation, intelligence and scientific research as continuous types of dealing with “indeterminate situations” and “settled situations”. His “theory of inquiry” is an attempt to answer the question of how

9 Concerning the relevance of antagonism for developing processes, Addams (who was strongly devoted to the value of unity and her thoughts that moral antagonism is rooted only in personal feelings and not also in objective social conditions such as class or cultural elitism or white or masculine privilege) for a while did not agree with Dewey’s view that antagonism or conflict between ideas or institutions has a functional value. She finally (1885) changed her position on the basis of her experience and an intellectual examination of the Pullman Strike, a laborer’s strike in Chicago in 1894. For a discussion of this topic, see pp. 12–14 below.
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Indeterminate situations can be reconstructed by argumentative means such as hypotheses and syllogisms, and thus again provide orientation. According to Dewey, science is problem solving. This pragmatist embedding of theory implies the existence of an ethically infused action horizon at any given time, where all research begins and ends. Thus Dewey disagrees with the notion that science is non-evaluative and rejects a strict dichotomy of facts and values. According to him, both the scientific and the ethical discourse (the latter is perceived as a reflection of action-motivating aims) exist within a continuum, providing preliminary valid solutions argumentatively (that is, without recourse to metaphysical assumptions/apriorities) for limited problem situations (Nagl 1998: 123).

Dewey therefore rejects a metaphysical/laws-of-nature conception of norms which claims the existence of an unquestionable system of "eternal values" that are not accessible to a learning process. Thus neither a theoretical nor a practical attempt to solve a problem is directed at absolute ends, but merely at "ends in view".

These "ends in view" come in sight in specific problem-solving contexts. To a certain extent, they are explorable and accessible to arguments. Thus Dewey extends experimenting10 to the scope of ethics, that is, he advances open, experimental access to ethics. Ethical motivations and the arguments used to defend them hold a status that is revisable by means of a learning process.

From a pragmatic point of view, the ethical learning process is therefore entirely hypothetical-situational: ethical rules and purposes have to be perceived as intellectual tools which can be confirmed and changed when they are tested with regard to the anticipatable consequences of compliance with them (1929: 221, quoted in Nagl 1998: 126). Each purpose, and consequently each ethically valid purpose of an activity (which remains an end in view), can only be labelled "good" if its anticipated consequences are desirable and this presumption can be substantiated by means of acceptable arguments.

If, as Dewey states, in the future, every purpose can be perceived as a means to an end, (that is, an end in view), then the question arises, whether the conception of mankind's destiny as an end in itself, every human being's inalienable dignity and worth and the comprehension of the ability of human beings to act in an autonomous and ethical way – values which are inherent to any modern ethics – becomes negotiable. According to Putnam and Putnam, this question

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10 According to Dewey, 'experience' always has an aesthetic content. Free exploration of our experiencing, which is what pragmatism stands for, must not be reduced to those elements which are designated as 'basal' in scientifically disciplined empiricism, that is, recordable sensory data (cf. Dewey 1938a: 114). According to Dewey, the creative moment plays a key role in any kind of experience making (see Nagl 1998: 140). To the aesthetic experience the philosopher must go to understand what experience is' (Dewey 1934: 278).
can be answered in the negative. For Dewey, acts rest on the basic assumption that whatever human beings appreciate and deem good, they want to create themselves and do not merely want to receive something that is given to them. This presumption – that ethical values are the provisional result of a “productive activity” – is a residue of the classical autonomy concept (Kant) which makes it possible to criticise “heteronomy” as a “passive state of satisfaction or pleasure” (Putnam and Putnam 1995: 215, quoted in Nagl 1998: 128).

The democratic shaping of public circumstances and legal/institutional regulations

According to Dewey, modern science, which is pragmatic-situational and considered to be in a continuum with ethical-political interventions, is inextricably connected to societal circumstances. The type of social system directly affects the developmental possibilities of the growth potential of intelligence.

While traditional societies do not explicitly intend to make changes, post-traditional societies consider a turn for the better their first and foremost mission. In order to achieve this aim, they require educational norms and methods other than those that strive for society’s unaltered continuance. Dewey explicates the characteristics of post-traditional societies on the basis of democratic states, which, according to their constitutions, commit themselves to the democratic shaping of public circumstances. In such states, legal-institutional regulations can never be laid down in a completely stable way, but constitute a constant challenge. Democratic socialisation has to be developed continuously with regard to the requirements, problems and conditions of the social life shared by members of society in the course of time (Dewey 1938b: 299).

For Dewey, the concept of participative democratic socialisation constitutes the “social ideal”, providing the best learning and interaction opportunities compared to other tested types of societies. This is achieved by providing public space to pragmatic/experimental activities in terms of freedom to hypothesise and to criticise protected by the right to freedom of thought and speech. But democracy as a social idea is a much broader concept than could ever be put into practice in real democracies. It is a regulative idea and serves as a continuous critical corrective to improve real or existing democracies.

According to Dewey, the best realisation of the democratic concept is only possible if all kinds of human associations, such as family, school, industry and religion, are involved (1927:325) and if the degeneration of democratic life is constantly counteracted by the expansion of participative elements within political parties and by strengthening and developing voluntary associations (NGOs, for example) and establishing an education process that allows for the best possible implementation of the concept of participative democracy within interpersonal interactions.

According to Dewey, the process of the improvement of institutions is interlinked with critical public argumentation. Ideally, everybody would
participate in political argumentation and decision-finding processes; neither of these processes should be delegated to experts, for this would equal a limitation of the plurality of viewpoints, nor should these processes be terminated prematurely by means of ballots, which are held to a large degree without argumentations: they fulfil the democratic requirements only in a superficially formal way, and lead to a predominance of the majority.

According to Dewey, the improvement of real and existing types of democracy can be achieved without recourse to rationalistic constructs or societal metaphysics. It is possible by filtering the desired characteristics out of existing types of communal life on the one hand, and by criticising the undesired ones and pointing out alternatives and improvements on the other (Dewey 1916: 115). In this regard, he suggests two test criteria to determine the potentials which can be tapped for the differentiation of democratic ways of life:

The two points selected by which to measure the worth of a form of social life are, the extent in which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups. An undesirable society, in other words, is one, which internally and externally sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience. A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic (ibid.).

By asking the second question, Dewey rejects an anti-universalistic, particular ethical concept primarily confined to one’s own reference group. He emphasises that the free and comprehensive interaction between groups of different classes, religions, sexes and races, while maintaining mutual respect (Dewey 1996: 128), is a crucial factor in the development of the intelligent learning potential, which is the decisive prerequisite for making democracy a concrete reality.

At this point (among others) an overlap between Dewey’s arguments and Jane Addams’ thoughts on the process of social-ethical education/cultivation becomes evident. According to Jane Addams, the process of social-ethical cultivation is an experimental process that can never be terminated and that involves continuous critical-constructive perplexity. For Dewey, in order to establish educational institutions which promote the participative democratic process, the contents of teaching and ways of learning have to be reformed in such a way that the students are enabled to assess crucial life problems in an autonomous and independent way (Dewey 1933: 211). In addition to this, “a democratic society must have a type of education that gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind securing social changes without introducing disorder” (Dewey 1916: 115).

According to Dewey, education should follow the enlightenment aspects of pragmatic instrumentalism, that is, it should be anti-dogmatic and open to experiences. The same applies to social learning in the narrower sense, since
an understanding of the activities and way of life of others is a prerequisite for the pursuit of common objectives.

Jane Addams: The acquisition of social-ethical and democratic competences by means of the experience-oriented immersion of oneself in diversity, or The virtue of repeated perplexity

In *Democracy and Social Ethics* (Addams 1902/2002) Jane Addams reflects upon the ethical and democratic significance of an experience-oriented treatment of diversity and presents a critical analysis of those factors deterring various members of society from participating in the democratic shaping of their wellbeing. She points out that one main reason preventing many individuals from participating in democratic processes lies in the fact that hegemonic circumstances are legitimated by moral values ("benevolence", for example) that appear to be neutral. In reality, these values are loaded with prejudice and mirror power differences rooted in class, ethnic origin and gender. In this work, Addams examines the process of moral formation within six pairs of human relationships: the charity worker and the beneficiary, the parent and the adult daughter, the household employer and the servant, the industrial employer and the employee, the educator and the adult student, and the corrupt politician and the ward voter. For each relationship, Addams traces the ways in which the old individualistic, hegemonic and paternalistic morality (which was also her father's and the one she herself assimilated as a child) was evolving under the pressures of democracy into a new social humanitarian, or democratic, one (Knight 2005: 400). By describing the necessary ethical re-evaluations and related interpersonal and social conflicts in an ongoing process of democratisation and emancipation, Addams wished to show, like Dewey, that the best realisation of the democratic concept is only possible if all kinds of human associations or social systems are involved (1927: 325). This concept led Silvia Staub-Bernasconi to call Jane Addams one of the first system theoreticians.11

By way of example, this democratic-ethical transformation process—which was reflected upon by Addams in her paper "A Modern Lear" and in a more general form in *Democracy and Social Ethics*—will be investigated. This process developed through the emancipation attempts of the industrial workers of the Pullman Factory in Chicago. This conflict, in which Addams was also involved as an official mediator, culminated in a three-month-long strike that spread all over the nation and was finally put down by the National Guard.

“A settlement involved in the work conflicts of its town is a matter of surprise and shows that people do not recognize that such a settlement is

obligated to advocate for social justice and social order, and even produce relief, as long as our industrial system mocks all claims of morality” (Addams 1923: 70).

George Pullman was one of the most successful industrialists of his time; a railroad-car manufacturer, he built a village for his workers, with factory-owned houses, shops and inns. However, the workers’ lives were subject to strict control: curfews, strict prohibition of alcohol in the inns, and smoking regulations. The motivation behind this and similar social endeavours was the paternalistic and charitable attitude of the industrialists, who pretended to care for their workers. At the same time, the factory owners expected an economic advantage, because it was profitable for them to be engaged in housing construction and retail; this configuration also provided a boost for work morale, since satisfied workers are more productive and less prone to strike than dissatisfied workers. Keeping in mind the analyses of Richard Sennett, one has to consider the fact that in areas of high capitalism, where individuals found themselves more and more isolated and abandoned to the chance fluctuations of the market, “the corporate paternalists tried to weld family and work together symbolically through images of themselves as authorities. In doing so, they wanted communal cohesion, and from this stable community of workers to obtain higher rates of productivity” (Sennett 1993: 62).

In Addams’ words, the basic difficulty of such charity and benevolence lay in the fact that:

An individual was directing the social affairs of many men without any consistent effort to find out their desires, and without any organization through which to give them social expression. The president of the company was, moreover, so confident of the righteousness of his aim that he had come to test the righteousness of the process by his own feelings and not by those of the men. He doubtlessly built the town from a sincere desire to give his employees the best surroundings. (Addams 1902/2002: 66).

She adds:

His state of mind was the result of the fallacy of ministering to social needs from an individual impulse and expecting a socialized return of gratitude and loyalty... By the very exigencies of business demands, the employer is too often cut off from the social ethics developing in regard to our larger social relationships, and from the great moral life springing from our common experiences. This is sure to happen when he is good “to” rather than “with” them, when he allows himself to decide what is best for them instead of consulting them (ibid.: 70).

In “A Modern Lear”, Addams investigates the idea that Pullman was a powerful paternalistic employer by comparing Shakespeare’s King Lear to the modern industrialist. According to Sennett, what unites the two is “that their patriarchal benevolence invited rejection, Lear at the hands of his daughter Cordelia, Pullman at the hands of his workers. Her method was metaphor-
cal – Pullman is a Lear – because her subject was ‘A boss is a father’” (Sennett 1993: 67).

Pullman's paternalism was clearly expressed in his views on property. No worker was allowed to buy a house, as this would have weakened Pullman's own control and interrupted him in his doing of good works in the form of egoistic benevolence (ibid.: 63). Since, through his paternalistic attitude, Pullman contradicted the individualism of the time, expressed in the employees' desire for own private property, they had to negate and rebel against the terms of his benevolence if they did not want to sink into abject dependence. “This prolonged strike clearly puts in a concrete form the ethics of an individual, in this case a benevolent employer, and the ethics of a mass of men, his employees, claiming what they believed to be their moral rights” (Addams 1902/2002: 65).

Addams uses the sense of betrayal felt by King Lear and the industrialist Pullman in their daughter's/workers' moment of rebellion to illustrate how deeply they have tried to implant their own values in other people's lives: “I gave you everything I had! Your ingratitude is detestable!” At this moment of crisis, all parties involved have become aware of how paternalistic benevolence is constituted: as a control that is neither pure love nor pure power, furthermore as a construct in which altruism and egoism are joined (Sennett 1993: 68).

Addams shows how a series of events connected with the Pullman Strike exaggerated, and at the same time challenged, the code of ethics which regulated much of the daily conduct, and “clearly showed that so-called social relations are often resting upon the will of an individual, and are in reality regulated by a code of individual ethics” (Addams 1902/2002: 64). In this experience of conflict, all involved parties were confronted by a moral perplexity\(^\text{12}\) which can arise from the mere fact that “the good of yesterday is opposed to the good of today, and that which may appear as a choice between virtue and vice is really but a choice between virtue and virtue” (ibid.: 77).

In the following excerpt, Addams specifies the connection between individual morality/ethics and experience-based social morality/ethics:

> An exaggerated personal morality is often mistaken for a social morality, and until it attempts to minister to a social situation its total inadequacy is not discovered. To attempt to attain a social morality without a basis of democratic experience results in the loss of the only possible corrective and guide, and ends in an exaggerated individual morality but not in social morality at all… A man who takes the betterment of humanity for his aim and end must also take the daily experiences of humanity for the constant correction of his process. He must not only test and guide his achievement by human experience, but he must succeed or fail in proportion as he has incorporated that experience with his own. Otherwise his own achieve-
ments become his stumbling block, and he comes to believe in his own goodness as something outside of himself. He makes an exception of himself, and thinks that he is different from the rank and file of his fellows. He forgets that it is necessary to know of the lives of our contemporaries, not only in order to believe in their integrity, which is after all but the first beginnings of social morality, but in order to attain to any mental or moral integrity for ourselves or any such hope for society (ibid.: 78–79).

In summary, for Addams, the Pullman Strike unmasked the traditional morality of benevolence in its filial, philanthropic and industrial form as an instrument of oppression, mirroring a paternalistic or feudal employer/employee relationship, and therefore as an outdated ethic in the way that it hindered the labourers’ process for emancipation.

Using the example of the ethical transformation process in the feudal employer/employee relation, Addams promotes the view that individual development is inevitably linked to social development, a perception based upon evolutionary assumptions and shared with other proponents of pragmatist philosophy.

Like Dewey, she acts on the assumption that democratic societies provide the richest potential for individual development on the condition that, when possible, all members of the society embrace their particular perspectives and are able to perceive and appreciate this diversity as an enrichment of their perspective confinement. Both Dewey and Addams emphasise that the reciprocity of interests is a crucial precondition for unconstrained community life and for the growth of social and ethical skills.

This emphasis on the ethical character of reciprocity and the intention to align one’s own activities with the activities of others are the key points of Addams’ social ethics, which, according to her, should replace individual and particular (that is, based primarily on thought experiments) ethical conceptions: individual and particular ethical conceptions can only mirror limited individual experiential perspectives. Social ethics, on the other hand, is characterised by the fact that it is developed within a quantitatively and qualitatively rich, open social experience process (that is, concrete interactions), in the course of which ethical judgments and decisions are critically reassessed and refined. Addams claims that social ethics is based on actions and collective efforts, instead of on speculation and putting theories into practice. For Addams, experience means “learning of life from life itself” (Addams 1910: 72).

Addams developed her theories in a close relationship with the experiences she gained in the neighbourhood-settlement experiment she co-founded with her friend Ellen Gates Starr. Her and the other settlement residents’ active, cooperative approach is combined with an understanding of democracy as a rule for living and as geared to the education of the general public:

The pragmatic philosopher William James praised Addams’ way of living, saying, ‘You are not like the rest of us, who see the truth and try to express it. You inhabit reality’ (quoted in Hamington 2004: 97).
The common property of intellectual assets must be made accessible to those who are in an economically disadvantaged position. All that is best in our civilization leading to a freer and clearer understanding of life must become part of the means to access these assets if our American democracy shall survive. The educational work of the settlement, its altruistic service, its contribution to the improvement of the social situation and urban condition, are merely different forms of a striving for the social ethos of a democracy (Addams 1923: 89–90).

On the other hand, the approach of Addams and her settlement colleagues is geared towards socio-political schemes, such as the limitation of working hours for children and women (sweatshop reform), the setting up of annuity pensions, the fight for women's suffrage, participation in the international association for worker protection and rights, engagement for the improvement of hygienic standards (garbage reform), and mediation efforts between owners of large factories and their employees or their national and international piece work. According to this perception of social ethics, freedom and equality are not inalienable values, but values that have to be achieved by means of active striving through a tragic experience process, by working “with” and not “as representative for” disadvantaged (groups of) persons (Addams 1902/2002: 70).

Against the background of her practical experiential knowledge, Addams critically reassessed the significance of her theories in her own life. Thus she became convinced that neither knowledge and values nor theory and praxis should be seen as contrasting dichotomies, a conviction that was to make a lasting impact on her pragmatic method.

According to Addams’ pragmatic philosophy, established ethical convictions and principles are merely one tool among many. While they serve as a starting point for ethical deliberations on how to deal with current problems, they cannot be considered final answers. Ethical life is dynamic, and the nature of good cannot be determined once and for all. In fact, the nature of good has to be identified repeatedly, in light of specific circumstances and concrete situations.

This is exactly what Jane Addams does when she describes the ethical challenges of her time on the basis of concrete hardships. Recurrent topics in her ethical theory include experience, experimentalism, reciprocity, diversity between unequally positioned subjects, care and attentiveness to the oppressed, and non-violence. These are not primary principles, but rather interconnected emphases within a democratic world-view (Haddock Seigfried 2002: xvi).

The method of perplexity constitutes a crucial methodical element of the experimental, socio-ethical and participative-democratic cultivation process practiced and developed by Jane Addams during the course of the settlement experiment and her socio-political engagement.

But what does Addams mean by “method of perplexity”? 
According to Addams, social ethics goes far beyond a mere belief in the dignity and equality of all human beings. Social ethics requires a democratic mind, and with it the implication that the appreciation of the diversity of human experiences is the real source and the guarantee of democracy (Addams 1902/2002).

Like other representatives of pragmatist philosophy, above all John Dewey and William James, Addams identifies cognitive-emotional perplexity as the one experience that facilitates the constant development and differentiation of ethical skills and social sensitivity. These perplexities emerge particularly in very diversified, pluralistic societies and in daily contact with people with varied interests, habits and priorities, and render visible unfamiliar patterns of thinking, believing, evaluating, judging, behaving and acting. The experience of this diversity and otherness leads to an emotionally and intellectually perceived perplexity and the dissolution of familiar structures – to confusion striving for a resolution. These experiences of perplexity hold the potential for the realization of temporariness – the relativity and the limitation of our habitual weighing of interests, preferences and evaluations which cause others to be forgotten, ignored or suppressed.

However, these perplexities can only be resolved if one is determined to use them. One has to analyse and question the situation and the background against which he/she experiences it as confusing; in other words, he/she must challenge his/her traditional values (both intellectual and emotional) to develop a new, more differentiated, understanding of the confusing situation. This makes it possible to construct more differentiated mind, emotion and value patterns. Such resolutions or reconstructions are not immediately evident; they can only be detected in changes in habitual perspectives on a given factor and condition.

According to Addams, this change of perspective cannot be undertaken as a mere thought experiment; it requires concrete experiences resulting from concrete interactions with a variety of people and their living conditions. In this way, an embodied knowledge, which is closely connected with affections and emotions can emerge. In her writings, she describes such learning experiments using a number of real examples derived from experiences (neighbourly activities, listening, conversations) with differently grounded people in various precarious circumstances who met in the settlement.

According to Dewey and Addams, the interactive balancing and adjusting of different ideologies and truth claims is an intelligent alternative to their hardening and separation. These learning experiences are inalienable preconditions for ethical growth. Therefore Addams’ social ethics implies that in order to make social-ethical growth possible, people are obliged to choose their experiences, that is, they are responsible for becoming involved
with people whose history, customs, convictions and modes of life differ from the ones they have adopted so far. Immersing oneself in a diversity of people and in the different religions, customs, political orientations, and sexual and other practices which people have developed over the course of time is the best corrective against misjudgement, misperception and prejudice and the conflicts and even wars that they imply, and is an indispensable method for social progress.

In the scope of her experience-related social ethics, Addams ascribes moral weaknesses to excessive self-reflection grounded in the feeling that one is exceptional, which is extended to others in a similar position. For Addams, this applies to members of the upper middle class (George Pullman, for example), whom she calls poor democrats because of their social isolation within their own class, their passion for individualism and their snobbery. Such isolation, she argues, is a violation of the ideal of human unity and does moral damage to the soul. It is therefore an ethical and democratic obligation to counter the tendencies towards such egoistic social experiences by consciously choosing experiences that challenge our individualistic orientations in order to learn to see oneself in connection and co-operation with the whole.

Addams maintains that an experience-related process, through which people gradually learn to engage with others and their otherness, facilitates the transformation of the democratic belief in the value and dignity of all human beings into social ethics: “To follow the path of social morality results perforce in the temper if not the practice of the democratic spirit, for it implies that diversified human experience and resultant sympathy which are the foundation and guarantee of democracy” (Addams 1902/2002: 7).

Addams’ social ethics can thus be understood as an attempt to naturalize Kant’s categorical imperative, which demands the universalisation of the ethical law and requires that people under no circumstances perceive themselves as mere means to an end, but also constantly as an end in itself (Haddock Seigfried 2002: xix).

In her comments on capitalist exploitation, political corruption, women’s oppression and destruction and hardships due to war, Addams describes the terrible consequences of egoistic exceptionalism. She describes the psychological and practical ways in which the personal transformation needed to make the categorical imperative effective may be brought about. This ethical transformation is personal, but the paths leading to it are social, that is, saturated with experiences and their reflection, which mere thought experiments cannot substitute. These different experiences are necessary to understand the limitations and subjectivity of one’s own perception of ethics and to be able to recognize and determine which improvements and changes are required in a given situation within a specific context.

However, both Addams and Dewey emphasize that experiences per se cannot be adopted as values without being misleading. Thus conclusions drawn
from experiences constantly have to be questioned, adjusted and reassessed: the question *Does this experience have any value?* constantly has to accompany all those who practice the method of socio-ethical exploration (Addams 1910: 72). For Addams, Knight writes, it was “this persistent rethinking, and not only the experiences, that produced her profoundest insights and taught her the most about her class, her gender, and herself.” It was a continuous “struggle to integrate her experiences with her thought, and to change her mind” (Knight 2005: 404).

Critically reflecting on her own privileged position within the settlement, Addams demands of charity visitors (today’s social workers) an inevitable, self-critical process of self-awareness regarding their unconsciously incorporated privileged habitus, which usually has a subtly debilitative effect on the self-worth and the self-efficacy of less privileged persons. For example, a charity visitor finds herself perplexed “when she comes to consider such problems as those of early marriage and child labour; for she cannot deal with them according to economic theories, or according to the conventions which have regulated her own life” (Addams 1902/2002: 21). By gaining deeper insight into the lives of working class people, she “discovers how incorrigibly bourgeois her standards have been, and it takes but a little time to reach the conclusion that she cannot insist so strenuously upon the conventions of her own class, which fail to fit the bigger, more emotional, and freer lives of working people” (ibid.).

Addams stresses that those who are not prepared to perceive their convictions, values, virtues and principles as preliminary and to reassess them in terms of their contextual appropriateness and their possible consequences on others, and to check whether specific, detrimental situations can be improved, will be more likely to impede than to support.

In this context Addams also points out the limits of this self-analysis and the conclusions that might be drawn from it: a person who voluntarily abandons social privileges, affluence and possessions due to feelings of solidarity with the poor can still never understand what non-voluntary poverty and exclusion, in the form, for example, of fear of starvation and social contempt, can do to a person (ibid.: 31).

Nevertheless, the breaking up of rules and patterns which prove to be too narrow for the creative and effective handling of current social/ethical problem positions is, according to Addams, the highest degree of an ethical life. When people allow differences to become apparent in the course of cooperation with others, they not only grant a right to others; they also enrich their own, always limited, life experience. Last but not least, they create an enriching aesthetic experience and learn to understand what a humane way of existence requires and at the same time offers, namely socially accountable realization and the growth of freedom.

A philosophical way of thinking committed to freedom does not shy away from self-puzzlement, the abandoning of safety and self-endangerment, but calls for them over and over again.
Conclusion

Addams' socio-ethical considerations remained unnoticed within philosophy for a long time (not least because of anti-activist and sexist tendencies within powerful philosophical schools of thought, see Hamington 2004: 99), with feminist philosophers and ethicists, only recently feminist philosophers and ethicists began to rediscover her rich body of work.

Referring to Marilyn Fisher, Maurice Hamington points out that Addams' perception of social ethics highlights aspects and perspectives which can be found among recent proponents of care ethics. Hamington locates key aspects and preconditions of care ethics positions in Addams' considerations, such as human embodiment, sympathetic knowledge, the relational approach to morality and the valorisation of context (Hamington 2004: 99). As noted above, Addams made many important contributions to questions of social justice, women's/worker's empowerment, the integration and equal treatment of the culturally and ethnically oppressed, and peace/democracy education – topics that extend well beyond care ethics aspects. Ethical questions regarding socially just choices, the (re-) distribution of basic public goods, and social partaking opportunities – questions that are inherent in social work – are indispensably linked to the mentioned aspects of care ethics in Addams' considerations. In all these questions, the essential point is creating help or non-help not only efficiently, but also effectively, that is, targeted to the concrete needs, skills and potentials of an individual case. Help/non-help proves to be efficient when it promotes the service users' (individuals, families, groups or communities) self-efficacy and consequently provides sustainable support for self-help. Addams' approach to both her theoretical considerations and activities highlights that this help for self-help competence comprises continuous education and the improvement of one's socio-ethical skills. Only through constant refinement can this "help for self-help competence" be geared towards individual needs, socially accountable and (according to Addams) participative/democratically aligned.

The above analysis of Addams' social ethics makes it clear that social work as perceived and practiced by Addams must also be seen as an experimental ground for continuous education and the differentiation of socio-ethical competences that serve as a basis for the participative-democratic operational action potential.

This democratically aligned task area of social work is no less relevant today than it was in Addams' time; on the contrary, in light of increasing migration movements and social differentiation, the challenge of shaping (socially, politically, and ethically) a beneficial co-habitation of people who are affected by different world-, reality- and self-constructions and different value patterns is becoming ever greater. In the face of such challenges, Addams introduced a continuous ethical reflection procedure, which, frankly speaking, must be taken as a methodical basis for any social work activity.
which aims at developing empowerment, help to self-help, emancipation and participation as attainable skills.

In order to render visible values (of individuals, groups, teams and organizations) which in practice often affect a person in a hidden and unconscious way, Addams demands that the method of repeated perplexity be used. This process leads one to relinquish safety by consciously seeking contrasting experiences and the sense of adventure that comes with embracing the unknown, the other and the strange. This is perceived as a socio-ethical virtue, which, at the same time, constitutes a method of continuously cultivating one's socio-ethical skills.

In order to deeply engage in perplexity, the ability to trust in tentativeness/relativity, as opposed to a fixed mode of existence, is required. It is indispensable that one makes oneself aware of one's own presumptions and prejudices, and does so repeatedly and self-critically. These approaches influenced by perspectives have to be subjected to public negotiation, that is, they have to be made argumentatively accessible and discussible.

In principle, this challenge is directed at and affects all people, since the fact that self- and world-references can only be developed and cultivated in exchange with others applies to everyone. Furthermore, it is a crucial precondition of a participative-democratically aligned lifestyle.

But for those who strive for the improvement of psychosocial circumstances on a professional level – such as social workers – this challenge is also a professional-ethical virtue, according to Addams, it demands that they put participative-democratic aspirations into practice to the greatest possible extent in their professional activities and attitudes, that is, that they substantiate it in the form of work methods so that it can be experienced and practiced as a condition for facilitating self-efficacy and self-help. By making concrete, resource-oriented contributions to the design and realization of social support measures, socially disadvantaged people can develop a more differentiated and more responsible way of handling freedom, and as a result will be able to actively co-promote the process for their emancipation and inclusion.

The first part of this article examined the potential for the implementation of ethical discourses within social work. The pragmatic approach of social ethics (1) provides a means to empower participants as they collectively work to establish and carry out common ends (which implies the rejection of the top-down imposition of solutions by authorities or elites) and (2) demands the constant, experimental embracing of differences as a crucial precondition for the improvement of social and democratic circumstances.

In summary, the following can be derived from the pragmatic approach:
• The demand that social workers become comprehensively qualified to deal with normative claims, values and value assessments in a critically reflexive and deliberative way. They are confronted with these factors in their daily practical work due to the divergent interests and claims
of colleagues, service users (individuals, families, groups, communities), provider organizations, political decision makers, civil society etc.

- At the same time, these values, claims and value assessments are inherent to the various attitudes of the individual sciences which produce results drawn from social work sciences. Representatives of these individual sciences could co-operate with social workers in multi-professional teams and case-work-processes. These competences play a decisive role, insofar as a considerable part of effective and efficient social work is the successful creative handling of co-operation between service providers and resource providers for social measure processes. Since the contents of this co-operation always imply ethical questions (among others), these have to be made explicit. At the same time, value assessments have to be balanced in collective discussions that follow accounted ethical argumentation and substantiation patterns. In these processes, it is the duty of social workers to argumentatively call for and defend those values which constitute the “immediate quality” of their profession (see p. 3).

- The demand for the consistent practice of user/carer involvement, or service types and service methods providing rich potential for active participation in the structuring of the support measures for service users.

- Taking into account the experiential knowledge resulting from various first-person perspectives – from social workers in different areas of practice, from service users affected by different social problems and exclusions etc. – is an indispensable precondition for praxeological (Bourdieu) social work-theoretical and social work-ethical substantiation development that is committed to structuring social work services that would meet the (educated) needs of the affected and consequently become more effective and more efficient.

- It is vital to remember the assumption that ethical theory, like any other theory, has to emanate from the life-pulse, an assumption which was promoted by Addams and is valid for pragmatist theory approaches in general.

- This is the only way to develop social works ethics which are not constructed “top-down” (ethical codices), but “bottom-up”: based on concrete life experiences and focusing on central ethical values as skills to be cultivated.14

14 Martha Nussbaum has taken a significant approach to social work’s effective range. She describes challenging norms, namely the ones crucial to human rights, in terms of capabilities to be acquired. To a large extent, Martha Nussbaum’s concept is committed to the pragmatic perception of ethics. She describes the conditions leading to the potential of a self-determined realisation of a life full of quality as capabilities, which are grounded in basic universal human characteristics. Every human is endowed with this innate potential. The development of these efficiencies must be rendered possible to everybody. For further details see: Nussbaum, M. C. (1986), Nature, Function and Capabilities: Aristotle on Political Distribution. Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy (145–184).
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PART II

Social work in transformation: challenges to ethical discourses
The increasing interest in ethics in social work coincides with the increasing involvement of religious, and especially Christian, participants in this debate. They emphasise that social work is rooted in the Judeo-Christian culture and the pastoral work of religious communities. The contrary position argues that social work has been emancipated from its religious legacy since, as a profession, it is based on science and secular rights which had to be established against a Christian tradition in line with the idea: Not alms but rights; not charity but professionalism.

This argument follows the theory of modernisation, which is based on the idea that science and rationality will increasingly replace religious beliefs and traditions. By defining modernity as the opposite of tradition, religion became something that has to be overcome. But religion did not vanish in modern times, as Max Weber and other modernisation theorists had expected. On the contrary, in today’s world, religion has been gaining ground among the world’s population (Norris and Inglehard 2004). This holds true not only for the United States, where religious conviction never diminished as it did in Europe, but also for South America and large parts of Asia and Africa. Religion has also played an increasingly significant role in some transformation societies following the breakdown of socialism. At the same time, there has been a decrease in religion in western Europe and similarly affluent societies. However, despite this decline, a remarkable increase in religious debates can be noted. Since the 1980s, one can speak of a "religious turn" in public discourse.

Religious versus secular discourses

A religious turn

One important indicator of this religious turn is Samuel Huntington’s highly influential idea of the “clash of civilizations” (1996). This author claimed that, following the collapse of the socialist societies, the world is entering the age of confrontations between different “civilizations” which are mainly shaped by
religious belief systems, in particular between the Christian and the Muslim world. But Islamic fundamentalism has also played a part in the religious turn of political discourses. One milestone was the Iranian revolution (1978), with its slogan “Neither East nor West but Islam”, which demonstrated how neither the western promise of wealth for everybody through a capitalist system nor the socialists’ concepts of social justice and solidarity hold sway throughout the world.

At the same time the increasing migration of people of different religious backgrounds has enhanced religious plurality in many countries. Religion has become more closely linked with problems related to immigration and questions of national identity. This is one reason why, for instance, the Judeo-Christian character of Europe is being increasingly emphasised, especially in reference to the possible accession of Turkey to the EU.

Claims that not only the idea of Europe, but also the formulation of human rights, are basically a Christian project, cite, for example, the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, which announces in its first Article that it is self-evident “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Here, a reference to God forms the basis for claims to equality for all men.

Universalism versus exclusivism

Secularists understand this as an unjustified usurpation. In response, they claim that the fight for human rights has mainly been a fight against the church – concerning, for example, the right of free choice of religion or the equality of men and women. This fight continues today, for example, in battles for the reproductive rights of women or for the rights of homosexuals. These rights still have to be defended against representatives of Christianity (as well as representatives of Islam and Judaism). Moreover, it is argued that the different religious systems not only stand against the recognition of human rights, but have also often been the source of their violation, as the long history of atrocities and inhumanities perpetrated in religious wars and crusades and by militant missionaries upholding slavery and colonialism shows.

This argument fails to take account of the violent and cruel history of secular ideologies, such as Fascism, National Socialism (Nazism) and Stalinism. It also overlooks the injustice of secular ideologies like racism, where the hierarchy of the “races” was “scientifically” proven and promoted by the great philosophers of the Enlightenment (Immanuel Kant, for example), and sexism, which is based on assumptions about the different “nature” of men and women.

Taking the definition of reason and rationality as its highest value, the Enlightenment created a tool for categorising people in line with this criterion and putting them into different classes and castes. This had the same
function as religious systems’ claims to an exclusive access to God and the truth. In both cases, an instrument to justify exclusion and hierarchical orders is the result. At the same time, religious as well as secular systems incorporate claims of equality and humanity. Both systems therefore have a deeply ambivalent structure. They both legitimate universalism as well as exclusivism. Therefore, religion is not only a place of love and peace, nor is secularism only one of equality and human rights, even though they understand these as their respective central aims.

It follows that religion versus secularism cannot be understood in a dichotomous way. The mutual influence and internal dependency of the two approaches should also be examined.

**Secularisation as mutual interchange**

Secularism is not the same as atheism. It does not exclude religion. It is rather a specific modern way to deal with religion in western societies. Secularism is the ideology that religion is and should be separated from public life. It refers to the process of secularisation, which began with the Enlightenment and modernity. In the first place, secularisation meant the removal of the authority of Christian Churches in legitimating political systems and determining public life. Instead of a Holy Order, the state should be primarily based on the republican consent of the people governing themselves. This separation of church and state led to a sharp decrease of religious influence and, in the long run, of religiosity in terms of church attendance and church membership.

However, the separation of church and the public realm and the concomitant decrease of the influence of the Christian churches does not mean that secularisation equals a loss of religiosity. A paradoxical effect of secularisation has been the sacralisation of the profane: Everyday life and work becomes imbued with a spiritual meaning. Thus dogmatic beliefs have been replaced by individualised images of God and different forms of spirituality. This individualisation has led to the widespread phenomenon of “believing without belonging”.

In response, the churches had to change to meet the changing needs of an individualised religiosity and to find a new role in a predominantly secular society. Ziemann (2009) described this process of modernisation of the churches, which made them into well-organised, bureaucratised institutions with highly educated professionals. This professionalisation was highly influenced by secular concepts, especially those from the fields of pedagogy and psychology. In the course of this debate, there occurred a remarkable shift

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1 Buddhism and Confucianism are an important exception. The latter's status as a religion has even been questioned. The term "religion" was developed in the western – predominantly Christian – context. Therefore the following applies only to this region.
in the focus of religious attention: Today, one rarely encounters narrations of
hell and purgatory focusing on anxieties and eternal punishment, these hav-
ing been to a large degree replaced with narrations of love and a benign God.
But there has not only been a strong influence of secular thoughts on religion;
religion has also made an impact on secular concepts. This is especially true
of the social sector, where the debate has gained new momentum.

The Christian impact

The growing influence of Christian churches is not limited to ethical debates,
but also encompasses the institutions of the welfare system. In most coun-
tries – as a recently published international comparative research on Europe
shows (Bäckström and Davie 2010) – churches are offering an ever-increasing
number of social services in many different areas. Many times, this is not pub-
licly recognised. Similarly, research concerning this subject is hard to come by
– in contrast with the US, where religiosity and social work are of immense in-
terest to academics (Jeppson Grassmann 2010). The reason why the churches
have been increasing their influence even, for example, in the Scandinavian
countries, where the state traditionally cares for everybody from “the cradle to
the grave”, has mainly to do with the tendency towards privatisation of public
services, which first appeared in the last decade of the past century, if not ear-
lier. This means that services that were formerly provided by the public sector
have now been taken over by the market, that is, by for-profit organisations or
by secular or religion-based non-profit agencies.

This is a situation where the churches are often able to offer cheaper services,
since they pay their employees less and use many volunteers in their work. This
is mainly due to the Christian idea that welfare is based on charity motivated by
a commitment to making the love of Christ visible. The social commitment of
both volunteers and professionals is understood as an expression and testimony
of their faith. As they lose ground in society, such professions of Christian
belief through diakonia and caritas are becoming more and more important for
churches. In fact, most Christian churches have been confronted with an im-
mense crisis in past decades: church attendance, church membership and the
recruitment of priests have been rapidly declining. In general, the church has
lost a great deal of credibility among the population. But this does not hold true
for Christian social services, which, in contrast, have been consistently gaining a
better reputation. The result is a contradiction: as societies are becoming more
and more secularised, churches are becoming more and more influential.

Below, I will take a closer look at the situation in Germany. The German
context certainly differs from that of many other countries, mainly because
of the comparatively high share of church involvement in social welfare; nev-
evertheless, this analysis may point out general tendencies which can be also
observed in many other countries.
As the opinion polls in Germany show, Caritas, the largest Catholic welfare organisation, has gained – in contrast to the church – a great deal of public attention and recognition. In the words of an executive director of Caritas: “During the last 30 years of constant crisis, the number of employees (at Caritas) grew a great deal, new accommodations and institutions were raised, and many new projects have been started” (Marcus 2006: 103). Today, the number of Caritas employees far exceeds the number of personnel employed in the church itself (500,000: 20,000; 25 times more).

Church leaders are well aware that their credibility depends to a great degree on their performance in the social sector and that this is the main way to get in touch with secular society, or as Cardinal Innitzer explains: “Caritas is the translation of the Gospel which the non-believers also understand” (Kübler 2006: 121). Social services are understood as a mission. They are to spread Christian ideas throughout society. Therefore, employees of Christian welfare organisations are urged to confess their belief in their work. Clerical authorities have once again begun to emphasise this aspect. This means, for example, that, whereas finding a job at Christian agencies was once non-problematic if one was not a member of a Christian church, today, even students seeking internships at such institutions are required to be members of one of the Christian churches.

This re-Christianisation has also appeared in the process of the unification of East and West Germany. The social services of the former German Democratic Republic have all been closed down and replaced by mostly Christian institutions. And East Germany is a region where religiosity is a rare phenomenon: it is by far the most atheistic area of not only Germany, but in the whole of Europe (Casanova 2007: 323). This is due not only to forty years of socialism, but also to a long history of anti-religious attitudes, which, for example, led to Protestantism towards the end of the Middle Ages (Höllinger 1996). With the embedded establishment of Christian institutions ranging from kindergarten and youth club activities to senior citizens and nursing homes, the impression one gets is hardly one of a population whose needs are being met, but rather of people having a Christian mission forced upon them.

The churches also expand their influence by offering cheaper services than state-run institutions, something that they can do because their employees earn less money than employees at secular institutions. Christian organisations in Germany aren’t subject to public law like other organisations. They can make their own contracts concerning wages, worker participation and union activism. This is known as the “third way”. This, again, is legitimised

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2 In East Germany, only a fourth of the population believe in God, and less than 10% attend church services (ibid.).
by the particular morality of church institutions, which is based on charity and not on workers’ interests.³

The power of churches in Germany is also bolstered by the fact that their institutions are mostly funded by the state, that is, by taxpayers who may be Christians, Jews, Muslims, practitioners of other faiths, or even atheists. The churches themselves contribute only a small part of their expenses (Frerk 2005).

An international study conducted by Bäckström and Davie (2010) showed that social work professionals and public officials view the involvement of churches in welfare as controversial. On the one hand, many of them welcome church services wholeheartedly, because, in many cases, they are said to be more flexible, especially in the case of sudden disasters. They care for those who are most needy and even invisible in society, and their personnel is highly motivated by their faith-based commitment. In contrast, civil servants are often characterised by a disinterested mentality: they were said to be “just doing their job”, and to not care about people. They seem more impersonal, distant and even cold – this is also due to a bureaucratic system.

This opinion is countered by the opposite impression, namely that social services suffer severely in terms of quality due to the increasing influence of churches and their volunteers, since “love is not enough”, as some stated. Professionalism is needed, as well as a warm but distant relationship which does not patronise or even follow a specific mission. “Love is for free and so it’s convenient for public authorities to exploit this situation” (Frisinia 2010:157).

This ambivalence mirrors the fact that Christian churches are part of society and its establishment on the one hand and claim a specific moral competence which allows them to see themselves as the conscience of society on the other. They identify with the poorest of the poor, and at the same time claim to represent all members of society. They often support the existing societal order; this is especially true of the hierarchy of men and women, but also applies to social classes and the established majority vis-à-vis minority immigrant communities. According to Christian ethics, it is possible to care for all who are in need and, at the same time, to agree to a normalising and exclusive society. This is also reflected in the “new” debate about Christian-based ethics in social work.

Ethical discourses

The basic normative picture that shapes the Christian image of social care is provided by the narrative of the good Samaritan, a random passer-by who helped a victim of a robbery out of a spontaneous human impulse. The rabbi

³ This is mainly due to Christian love towards the needy, writes the Landeskirchenamt Bielefeld der Vereinigten Kirchen Rheinland in a letter to the ver.di Bundesvorstand (labour.net, 7 August 2009).
and the Levite who first passed the robbed man lying near the street did not help him. But the Samaritan, who was a merchant and therefore, unlike the rabbi and Levite, not concerned professionally with human affairs, and who did not belong to the same ethnic group as the victim, who was an Israelite, nonetheless gave him half of his coat and enough money to care for himself.

Lob-Hüdepohl, a Social Work Professor at the Catholic University of Applied Science in Berlin who recently published an influential handbook for ethics in social work (2007), brings up the image of the good Samaritan in order to show that one should help not only those who belong to one's own group, but also be open for everybody who is in need.

I wonder whether the claim that one should give support to people of other ethnic groups requires additional moral justification. Is this not part and parcel of the professional duty to offer the best possible services to everybody who is entitled? This is not to say that social workers often make distinctions regarding people of different ethnic origin. This has been widely analysed in the field of intercultural social work, with the aim of eliciting critical self-reflections about one's own, often unconscious, biases in order to maintain a professional attitude. Equal treatment is not a question of a personal decision; it is demanded by professionalism in social work and by a political framework based on democratic principles declaring that everybody is entitled to the same treatment. The image of the good Samaritan supports the notion of acting spontaneously based on personal affection and moral endeavour.

Lob-Hüdepohl also asks why those in need receive support. For him, the basic feature of charity is that people do not have to earn it. No special effort is required to receive it. The receiver is simply in need, and gets unearned support. This, he argues, is nothing other than grace.

This concept is far from what social workers are used to and familiar with through principles of social work, according to which everyone is entitled to get the best possible support because this is their right as human beings. The obligation to provide support is explained by everyone's potential vulnerability as an individual or as a member of a group. Everyone can become an object of injustice, since society does not provide all people with the same chances. Many are cut off from access to different resources and from societal recognition. Therefore, it is the duty of a democratic system to re-enact human dignity and social justice to the greatest possible extent. Accordingly, social services have become institutionalised and professionals are trained and paid for their work. Helping is not a personal act and not – at least not in the first place – a question of morality.

In Christian argumentation, however, social work becomes moralised: professional work is transformed into a “good deed”, and the professional is understood as a moral subject. He/she helps because of moral affection and not because of his/her professional obligations. This is not to say that moral values don't play a role with everybody who works in social services; social justice,
social responsibility and an ethic of care may often fuel the motivation of people who choose these professions. However, this is never the first or only basis for their decision, but rather a part of a professional ethic that is based on human rights and scientific analysis. Christian moralisation, in contrast, makes a professional relationship into a benign act. The professional gets an additional “bonus” as a moral subject, while the user is depicted as somebody “undeserving” of care and support.

This moralisation endows the social service with a *transcendent* meaning, that is, an orientation towards a “higher” purpose, towards something which is out of the reach of the individual – as the term “grace” indicates. This *sacralisation* of professional work is, as noted above, a basic strategy of secularisation, since secularisation is not just the decline of religion and its political and social influence or its retreat into the private sphere; on the contrary, it also results in the sacralisation of everyday life and work.

The sacralisation and moralisation of social work result, in the first place, in a *de-politicisation*. The frame of reference is no longer society and the mutual obligations of its members. It devalues the basis of social work and its orientation towards the principles of democracy and human rights. The result is, on the one hand, individualisation, since it reduces professional relations to a matter of personal moral motives and replaces political standards with moral amendments; on the other hand, a hierarchisation emerges, whereby the professional receives a special moral bonus and the user becomes the object of charity which he/she did not earn. Such a reformulation takes social work out of its professional, science-based context and resettles it in the milieu of a morality to which Christians have special access.

At the same time, it should be noted that the moral standards of the churches often contradict even those of the Christian majority within society. Crucial areas include the equality of women and men, the recognition of sexual needs and different sexual orientations and reproductive rights. Hence, Christians live under a dual law. In the secular system, for example, a marriage can be dissolved; this is not the case under Catholic law. Normally, every Christian has to decide on his/her own how to deal with this discrepancy. But where Christian institutions that offer social services to everybody exist, the private becomes public. And as soon as Christian services understand themselves as part of a Christian mission, they are obliged to orient themselves and the users towards their belief system.

This has significant ramifications for the concept of counselling: Does it merely follow the need and perspectives of the user, or is it led by ideas which claim to be truer or to have a higher moral quality than others? This dilemma has been quite crucial, for example, with the question of abortion.

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4 It is not truth that counts in the first place, but the recognition of the other (ibid.: 156).
Secular social work counselling claims that counselling has to be neutral and open to all possible outcomes. The professional has to help each person find his/her own way to live up to his/her own standards of well-being and social responsibility. But if the aim of counselling is to deliver particular values and to adhere to a specific goal, which is set by the counsellor, one has to ask where professionalism ends and where clerical pastoral work begins. This has to be discussed openly to defend professional standards, but also to ensure transparency so that users know what they are getting.

This is a big challenge for secular social work, but not only in the sense of defending its own principles against growing religious influence. This debate also provides an opportunity to reflect on one's own principles by further clarifying one's standards and attaining an awareness of the constant interchange between religious and secular ideas.

The following section will focus on just a few of the manifold aspects of the debate on the role of religion in secular social work.

Religion and secular social work

The cultural legacy

The claim made by secular social work that each individual is to adhere to his/her specific needs works well as a principle; however, it is not wholly realisable in practice. Nor is secular social work neutral. This holds true in the sense that secular social work is also anchored in a specific milieu, which is predominantly shaped by Christian culture. This can easily be seen as soon as social workers have to deal with people of other cultures and religions. Intercultural social work has been addressing this topic for years, and an in-depth discussion of the subject will not be attempted here. It has been brought up to point out how Muslim users in predominantly Christian societies, for example, are usually treated less openly and less competently than Christian or secular people, since Muslims often are envisioned by the majority group as the Other.

But it is not only the Christian legacy in secular social work which makes Muslim users the Other – it is also secularist ideology itself. Secularism contends, as noted above, that religion is not compatible with modernity, that religiosity is old-fashioned, anti-modern and something which has to be overcome. But as research shows, this is not the case; at least on a worldwide scale, religiosity is constantly increasing. Therefore secular social work has to revise its assumptions. It has to deal with the fact that religion plays an important, if not ever-growing, role; rather than ignoring its existence and influence, it has to ask why this is the case, i.e. what are the functions of religiosity in different social contexts. Furthermore, social work has to ask whether religiosity helps people to cope with their situation or does them harm.
Religiosity as a resource?

The rise in religion is to be mainly attributed to poor countries and poor people within rich societies, since, over the last fifty years, there has been a constant decline in religiosity in affluent societies and among people who are well off, as Norris and Inglehard (2004) have shown. They explain this phenomenon by the fact that inhabitants of poor regions are susceptible to premature death, hunger and hunger-related diseases; they often have to face sudden disasters, from draught to floods. This vulnerability to sudden unpredictable risks is not as high in post-industrial societies. Norris and Inglehard claim that it is not education and growing knowledge that are responsible for the decline of religion, as Max Weber had prognosticated, but rather economic and physical security (the "security axiom").

Such an analysis is invaluable for understanding, for example, why Muslims in western societies are increasingly adhering to their religion. Statistics show that in Germany, no other group is as religious as the Muslim population (BMI 2007). One of the many reasons for this is their specific situation as migrants, where religion helps to sustain social cohesion and loyalty. This social cohesion can provide security in a hostile world, in addition to support in times of poverty, unemployment, sickness or old age. People have to rely on each other. Religion may be one approach to fostering this common reliance. At the same time, there is a tendency to seek an orientation that opposes assimilation to the dominant society. They want to live their "Otherness", openly and with self-confidence. And lastly, on the global level Muslims are linked by their religiosity through the *umma*, which gives them a sense of belonging that transcends national borders and reflects their transnational identities. So a desire for security is not the only factor in Muslims' adherence to their religion; cultural reasons associated with defending one's own identity and linking to a wider group also play a role.

Religion can also have an important function for social aspirations, as Roberts (1995) points out. Religion is especially appealing to people in lower income brackets who are striving for a better life, as it provides a context for asceticism and delayed gratification – such was the epoch-making appeal of the Protestant ethic described by Max Weber. Religiosity can help to compensate for limitations and efforts which are necessary for achieving one's goals of upward mobility, especially in cases where immediate gain cannot be expected. According to Roberts, this is the main reason why evangelical denominations in particular are so successful, for example, in South America and Asia, and especially in South Korea.

But religion is also attractive to people who are economically well off, since religion not only has social functions, but also very personal ones. In philosophical terms, it is said that religion helps to cope with contingency; this means that things don't have to be as they are. Everything could also be different. This elicits the need to find something absolute which helps to understand things that seem to happen by chance; things which are not and cannot be planned, which are out of
everybody's reach, such as life and death. Religion deals with transcendence. The crucial importance of this function of religion may be a particular phenomenon of the postmodern age, with its increasing fragmentation of living conditions.

At this point it is important to differentiate between religiosity as adherence to a church and religiosity as a spiritual orientation. As noted above, in many western societies, church attendance has declined sharply. On the other hand, corresponding downward trends concerning belief in some kind of spirituality cannot be noted. Only a tiny percentage of the population of western Europe is atheist, in the sense that they refuse any kind of Christian cultural rituals as well as any kind of spirituality.

Lastly, an inclination towards some kind of spirituality can be of crucial importance in coping with stressful life events. Therefore, it has to be taken into account in the context of psychosocial counselling. It is necessary to ask whether this spirituality can serve as a resource: for example, many women who have suffered from domestic violence and sexual abuse as children often turn to religion or some form of spirituality later in life. This does not seem very surprising, keeping in mind the function of religion: These women, overwhelmed by the painful memories of vulnerability and helplessness, try to make sense out of an event which was beyond their control. They try to locate themselves in a context of meaning. Therefore, one could understand their turning to religion as an effort to regain agency and control – but in a spiritual manner. The Christian approach promises agency by turning the victim into a sacrifice. Sacrifice means giving oneself, and even one's life, for a greater good and a “higher” aim – as Christ demonstrated with his death. This might help one to better cope with situations of powerlessness and humiliation by endowing them with a “higher” meaning.

But at the same time, one must ask whether this relief comes with a price. The spiritual orientation may support an attitude which accepts oppressive situations with relative ease. In the case of an institutionalised religiosity, it may even lead to submission to religious leaders in a self-oppressive way. In this case, the challenge facing professional social work is to consider whether spirituality should be viewed as a resource or as a danger to the subject. Does it enhance the subjective well-being of the specific person, or is there a danger that self-destructive tendencies will be reaffirmed?

The same should be asked on a societal scale: To what extent might religiosity be a resource for coping with existing deficiencies? Or is it rather a medium for adapting to social injustice?

Conclusion

In summary, I would like to make three brief points:

The religious turn presents an enormous challenge for secular social work.

Firstly, social work has to ask how the growing influence of Christian churches on theory and social practice should be dealt with. Here, it will be
necessary to differentiate clearly between clerical pastoral and professional social work, and to question a moralisation of the ethical discourse.

Secular social work should use this debate to critically reflect on its own cultural patterns and ideological basis, which are closely linked with the assumptions of modernisation theory.

There should be a general debate on whether and in what manner religion can be applied as a resource to cope with stress, discrimination and disrespect or in order to meet the spiritual need for meaning and orientation in life. At the same time, one should ask how and in which contexts religion could have a negative effect in terms of reinforcing self-oppression and repressive features of society. In short, in which ways can religion promote – or obstruct – individual well-being and social justice?

References


Chapter 5
The Right of Work: The Ethics of Disability and the New Ethical Dilemmas
Darja Zaviršek

"We are aiming to create a 'society for all' in which everyone has a chance to contribute through work."
Slogan of JEED, Tokyo, 2008

Introduction
While some claim that today the gap between the formal and actual rights of people with disabilities is widening, others believe that, by bringing many people with disabilities into the area of paid employment, the mainstreaming of employment (primarily in developed countries) has led to equality for some people. Work is supposed to increase inclusion and diminish stigma among people with disabilities. While focusing on the right of work, these debates overlook some other important issues. First, the continued existence of a value system behind the discourse of disability, based on the distinction between impairment as a bodily dysfunction, subjugates persons with disabilities to a normative identity framed within a “category” or “diagnosis” and the socially constructed discrimination which causes disability. Therefore, a person with disabilities is still primarily defined as a “disabled person”, despite his or her working abilities.

Second, massive unemployment throughout Europe, the development of high technology and the phenomena of the working poor and precarious jobs are causing a fundamental shift within the ideology of work, employment and social inclusion. Many of these processes have resulted in international discussions about the “end of work” (Rifkin 1995) based on the idea that in developed societies highly developed technology is eliminating the need for many traditional types of work until the industrial type of work will slowly going to disappear. While ordinary people are expected to be freed from repetitive labour, disabled persons are paradoxically expected to achieve greater equality by entering these forms of paid labour. While ordinary persons are recognised as “working poor” in certain branches of paid work, people with disabilities are encouraged to enter certain low paying jobs on the assumption that this will free them from exclusion and contempt. Are there already jobs where an exodus of non-disabled workers is creating vacancies that are being filled by disabled persons? And is this phenomenon not analogous to the extensive industrialisation of the poor regions of Africa and Asia in the 1960s and 1970's, which saw men leave physically demanding, low-paying jobs in farming or on plantations in search of a better life in urban industrial areas, with women then taking over the jobs that
they left? Taking account of these societal transformations, one has to question – despite the undoubtedly important right of paid employment for people with disabilities in developed and developing countries – the taken-for-granted-belief that work will bring social inclusion. Third, many people with disabilities do not work for payment, but for symbolic rewards. This is another aspect which, as will be shown, calls into question the idea of inclusion through work.

These issues bring up new ethical dilemmas associated with the moral idea of work – and workfare and welfare types of work in particular – as the precondition for the inclusion of people with disabilities.

**The right of work as fundamental part of the ethics of disability**

Today’s societies are successors of the modern era of institutional compartmentalisation of human differences and impairments by type. People with disabilities, including people with long-term mental health problems, were spatially segregated and made objects of cultural stereotypisation and the medical and social work gaze. They were de-personalised and became "internal others". The moral image of the disabled in the time of modernity included the idea that they were incapable of work.

Today, in many societies the moral imperative of inclusion has challenged the practice of seeing people with disabilities as less human than the non-disabled (Snyder and Mitchell 2006). At the same time, an international perspective clearly reveals the existence of different lay and professional values and practices regarding people with disabilities in different countries, and even within the same country systems. While traditional forms of social exclusion are found in some parts of the world as a general trend, in other parts individualised support prevails. Sometimes different parallel practices can be found in the same country – dehumanisation as well as empowerment. In most eastern European countries, people with disabilities live in large institutions; in most Asian countries, they live with parents and relatives (up to 73% in Sri Lanka for instance); and in western countries, many people live independently. In most western countries children and young people with disabilities go to ordinary schools; in eastern European countries and in most Asian countries, they go to special schools or don’t go to school at all. In Sri Lanka, people still believe that seeing a person with disabilities in the morning makes for a bad day, but at the same time, professionals have been creating specialised services to support the inclusion of children in pre-school education. Class, caste, ethnicity and religion influence the area of disability as well. While a girl living as a social orphan in a large Buddhist children's institution is prevented from attending school because of moderate intellectual disabilities, some professionals are

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fighting to allow children to enter ordinary education (ethnographic notes, Colombo, February 2010).

In many developed countries, mainstream social work practice consists of single-task intervention and tends towards deficit-oriented rehabilitation. As such, it fails to take into consideration the holistic perspective of people’s lives and to view them in a time-perspective (what Mark Priestly calls the “life-course approach”, see Priestley 2001). In many cases, social work practice continues to be individualised, and its focus remains on employment and sheltered workplaces, community residential care and the development of day centre facilities for people with various disabilities (including those with mental health problems). Recently the resilience discourse popular in developed and some less-developed countries has replaced the more critical concept of empowerment.

In most countries with social work education, smaller-scale (both in terms of numbers and funding), sometimes marginal, research and practice exist alongside mainstream social work theory and practice almost as a kind of a parallel system. Social workers, disability-led organisations and advocates have managed to shift a portion of the welfare resources and ideas towards centres for independent/integrated living, direct payment and personal assistance schemes and user-led services in some form or other almost all over the world (Access to Education and Employment for People with Intellectual Disabilities: An Overview of the Situation in Central and Eastern Europe 2006, Hayashi and Okuhira 2008).

A discrepancy can be observed: even in countries where people with disabilities are still sent to large-scale institutions and young people are sent to old people’s homes, such as Bulgaria and Slovenia, some non-governmental organisations and local municipalities provide funding for personal assistants employed by persons with disabilities (Shima and Rodrigues 2008). Similarly, direct payment, which is still a long way from being a mainstream practice for people with disabilities, is known not only in the UK and Sweden, but also in Slovakia, where the national scheme provides for direct payment, including the option of the person with the disability selecting his/her own personal assistant and agreeing on how care is to be provided (ibid.). In Slovenia, this is addressed not by a national scheme, but by a disability-led activist organisation that promotes independent living and self-determination; in recent years, its efforts have enabled more than one hundred persons to avoid entering institutional care (Independent Living of Disabled People 2004).

Disability activists and academics who debated oppression (and whose ideas were developed for the most part within disability studies conducted in a number of countries) began to have a more decisive influence on policy and practice, including social work, in the late 1980s. In 1997, the World Health Organisation (WHO) shifted the focus of what it defined as disability from a short- or long-term inability of functioning towards the theory of disable-
ment (WHO 1997). In 2001, the WHO adopted a document entitled “International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health” (ICF), in which emphasis was placed on the structural barriers experienced by individuals.2

Within disability studies these ideas became known as the theory of disablement. This theory looks at the interrelationships between (1) body structures and functions, (2) personal activities and (3) participation in society. It focuses simultaneously on the bodily or mental impairment of a person and the historical, economic, social and cultural barriers people with disabilities, including people with mental health problems, experience in their everyday lives. Mental health and disability have therefore become more than just a matter of health and care; they now involve issues of equality, human rights and personal agency (Sayce 2000). The moral understanding of people experiencing disability has changed, and today, the right to work is an important part of the ethics of disability.

International comparative social work research has shown that, regardless of their particular medical diagnosis, people labelled as disabled or having long-term mental health problems face some common economic, social and cultural types of oppression. Disablement and oppression are rooted in belief systems, practices and values which are common to the vast majority of societies. Key aspects of these belief systems that bear on the situation of people with disabilities include the value of work performance; child delivery and child-rearing; the normativity of bodily characteristics and the value of bodily beauty; independency in moving; communication skills that do not differ from those of the majority of people etc. At the same time, norms, practices and values differ greatly in terms of how much importance is attached to a specific norm in a given society. These local specificities, also known as culturally specificities – culture being defined in very broad terms as anything connected with human life – influence practices of disablement as well as practices of liberation.

The ethics of disability challenges the ways that non-disabled people exclude the disabled and create oppressive structures, including:

2 WHO, International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Heath (ICF):
‘The ICF puts the notions of ‘health’ and ‘disability’ in a new light. It acknowledges that every human being can experience a decrement in health and thereby experience some degree of disability. Disability is not something that only happens to a minority of humanity. The ICF thus ‘mainstreams’ the experience of disability and recognises it as a universal human experience. By shifting the focus from cause to impact it places all health conditions on an equal footing allowing them to be compared using a common metric – the ruler of health and disability. Furthermore ICF takes into account the social aspects of disability and does not see disability only as a ‘medical’ or ‘biological’ dysfunction. By including Contextual Factors, in which environmental factors are listed ICF allows to record the impact of the environment on the person’s functioning.”
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- spatial segregation and long-term institutionalisation;
- poverty, lack of basic medical, psychosocial and social work services, including assistive technology;
- segregated schooling, work and leisure activities which form parallel systems outside the mainstream educational, occupational and leisure structures;
- stigma, incarceration, prejudices and violence;
- restrictions of movement due to architectural barriers and exclusionary transportation;
- culturally incompetent services for disabled people of different ethnic minority backgrounds;
- oppression caused by family members, or family members being oppressed due to the fact that they live with a person with mental health problems or a person with disabilities;
- restrictions to living a private life, including having biological children and/or the right to adoption;
- single-task professional interventions and deficit-oriented rehabilitation.

Scully defines the ethics of disability as “the systematic reflection on morally correct ways to behave towards disabled people in everyday interactions, in healthcare or employment policy, or in law” (2008: 9). According to the current ethics of disability, the shift towards greater structural equality is supposed to be based on the principles of inclusionary policies and practices such as:

- implementation of the principles of independent/integrated living and consistent deinstitutionalisation through the use of direct payment and personal assistance schemes;
- support for the development of services led by disability activists and users and for disability and mental health users' organisations throughout the world;
- removal and prevention of architectural and design barriers and provision of assistive technology;
- adoption of affirmative strategies to include people with disabilities in mainstream educational, vocational, political, and recreational activities;
- use of holistic perspectives on people's lives and the life-course approach;
- employment mainstreaming through the use of vocational rehabilitation and accommodated and supported workplaces;
- self-determination of people with mental health problems and other disabilities, including the right to have children and/or the right to adoption;
- respect, acknowledgement, personal dignity, recognition and normalisation of the embodied difference.

Although the development of the ethics of disability has been strongly influenced by the disability movement and disabled activists, it nevertheless
remains ensnared in a non-disabled perspective that views things as being done “for the disabled”. “Providing access to all” is not seen as the general moral stance, but as “tolerance towards those who are different”. Exercises intended to facilitate inclusionary employment or schooling are made in the name of “tolerating differences”. The person who is “different” is defined by his/her specificities, which are primarily seen as deviance from those who are “not different”. Bodily specificities are first defined as a pathology so that they can later be normalised and de-pathologised as “difference”. Through such polarisation, an opposition between “sameness” and “difference” has already been created, with the latter labelled as deviance from the sameness. Tolerance towards the difference keeps alive the old-fashioned structural inequality covered by the discourse of tolerance and “accepting difference”; the notion of difference is used for those human circumstances which have already been defined as a problem.

The ongoing ethical dilemma for social work – especially in those countries where impairment itself is a major stigma – arises from the fact that people with disabilities are excluded from ordinary life by the disability label in order to be re-included through welfare system provisions (Zaviršek 2006, 2009). They are part of society, but their participation is an exclusionary one and their identity formation is based on negative images, stereotypes and stigma.

The focus of current debates on the ethics of disability is on the concepts of “embodied difference” and disability as a “site of resistance”, a “source of agency” and a “way of being” (Mitchell and Snyder 1998, Snyder and Mitchell 2006, Scully 2008). It is a perspective which makes people with disabilities themselves the ones who define ethical dilemmas and interpret the social reality in terms of the “embodied difference”. From this perspective, not having the right to paid employment has been viewed as a violation of the human rights of people with disabilities.

**Entitled to work but not for independent living**

It is therefore understandable that one of the principles of the ethics of disability is ensuring the right to work and/or paid employment in ordinary environments. In recent years redistributive justice and the mainstreaming of employment have become an important part of social policies in many countries of the European Union and elsewhere (Shima and Rodrigues 2008). Research titles like “The Process of Integration through Employment” show that the right to paid employment is sometimes seen as the most important condition for achieving equality and inclusionary societies. The slogan of the Japan Organisation for Employment of the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities cited above reveals a similar attitude, work being the major contribution of the disabled to societies (JEED 2008). Here a mixture of the workfare and restititional welfare ideology hegemonically took over the discourse of inde-
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pendent living and the concept of the redistribution of the economic as well as the recognitional goods (Fraser 1997).

The workfare discourse fails to question the types of jobs available and the reality of low-paying, repetitive, unsatisfying or even unpaid work is often accepted as a given. These precarious conditions are glossed over by an ideology that views work *per se* as a means to the inclusion of people with disabilities. Work has become more important than other human rights issues, such as the fact that many disabled people still live in large institutions and are prevented from making self-determined choices. This means that work itself might causes social exclusion and creates social outcasts. The imperative of work as a major condition for the inclusion of the approximately 650 million people living with disability worldwide brings up several ethical dilemmas. One is the question whether any kind of work really universally stimulates or even ensures inclusion. Furthermore, why is precisely work seen as the major inclusionary factor and not, for instance, independent living, caring for children and the elderly, or something similar?

The majority of people with disabilities who have entered paid employment occupy the less socially valued and lower-paying jobs in societies. The Integrated Service Solution (ISS) is an initiative that provides jobs for people with disabilities in several western European countries. The jobs it provides involve cleaning: cleaning train stations and airports, industrial cleaning, window and office cleaning, cleaning of cooling and heating systems. In France, for instance, 45% of all jobs for people with disabilities are in cleaning, landscaping, garbage removal and pest control (personal visit, project Equal, Paris, 17 May 2006). These jobs require very few qualifications, and employees do not need to be able to read and write.

Under state socialism in Yugoslavia, people with disabilities were heavily stigmatised and spatially segregated in large institutions and old people’s homes. “Invalids of war” were an exception. They were socially respected and guaranteed ordinary employment (Zaviršek 2005, 2008a, 2008b). In line with the ideology of “full employment”, in which social, health and other special benefits of the individual person came from full-time employment, the state started to develop “invalid companies” (since 1988), the successors of the “invalid workshops” (known since the end of 1990ies). These companies provided employment opportunities for those who became disabled only after they had entered paid employment. Companies in which at least 40% of all employees had a disability received a special status and financial benefits from the state. When Slovenia turned to a market economy after 1991, and especially in 1993 and 1994, the number of invalid companies drastically increased because these companies were entitled to tax relief and special subsidies for every disabled person they employed. Also, the establishment of invalid companies during the transition to neoliberal capitalism was in some cases a legal way to dismiss and segregate disabled workers at the larger firms. Under
socialism, the status of these employees had been protected by law and they
could not be fired. As these newly established invalid companies often went
bankrupt soon after they were established they provided a legally acceptable
way for disabled workers to lose their employment.

The ideology of the socialist universal full-time employment was replaced
with the workfare discourse. In 2005, there were 166 invalid companies in the
country, employing 13,580 employees, of which less than half (6,348 persons)
were disabled. In 2005, the average gross income of these workers was 32.2
percent lower than the average gross income of non-disabled workers at invalid
companies. People with disabilities were therefore not only segregated in
invalid companies, but also discriminated against through unequal salaries. To-
day, it can be assumed that disabled workers are found in large numbers among
the working poor; conversely, the latter can be found within invalid companies
(Leskošek et al. 2009). The concept of the working poor highlights the relation-
ship between a worker's income and the number of household members who
depend on his/her salary. Today, invalid companies employ nearly a fifth of all
employed disabled persons.3 In 2008, there were 167 invalid companies in the
country, employing 6,400 disabled persons (or 43.6 percent of all employees at
these companies).4 At the end of 2009, 166 invalid companies employed 5,614
persons with disabilities out of a total of 13,161 employees.5 The job situation
of people with disabilities does not automatically support their inclusion and
improve their social status, as the jobs they take often affirm the social distance
between jobs available to the disabled and the better paying, non-segregated
jobs available to the non-disabled.6 By being included in paid employment,
they are excluded from socially respected statuses. They can be symbolically
compared to the Untouchables in India or the Burakhumin in Japan, both of
which are constructed as the holders of a pollutive identity and stigmatised as
a group because of their socially undesirable jobs.

In the eastern European countries which entered the European Union in
2004 and 2007, new laws on employment formally ensured more equal access
to the labour market for the disabled but in reality more welfare jobs were in-
stalled. However, to date almost no empirical research on the effects of these
laws on the everyday inclusionary practices of people with disabilities has


5 Directorate of Invalids at the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs of the
Republic of Slovenia, 8 January 2010.

6 In 2009 a total of 34,000 disabled people were employed in Slovenia which has a 2
million population.
been conducted. In Slovenia, for example, the Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation Act\(^7\) was passed in 2004. The Act introduced a quota system for vocational rehabilitation, new employment companies and protected and accommodated workplaces.

In practice, mainly welfare employment – as opposed to ordinary jobs – has been offered to people with disabilities. Furthermore, the Act created new jobs for professionals like social workers, occupational therapists and educational specialists, who are requested to assess and follow the person during the process of vocational rehabilitation. The disabled person, on the other hand, has little or no chance of entering ordinary long-term employment.

Another aspect of this trend is that welfare employment for the disabled has recently become a niche for the privatisation of the welfare sector. Between 2007 and 2010 (that is, between the time the Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation Act came into force and the present), 27 employment centres employing 249 disabled persons were established throughout Slovenia\(^8\). The majority of these centres are private concessions (licensed private organisations)\(^9\). Like the invalid companies, these centres provide semi-segregated jobs; employment is precarious in terms of salary and length of employment. A similar increase could be noted in the number of new welfare organisations that provide vocational rehabilitation. Since 2006, 13 new organisations providing vocational rehabilitation services have been established; only one is a public institution, while the remaining twelve are licensed private organisations.

Although the number of employment centres indicates that more semi-segregated jobs for people with disabilities have been established in the last few years, data on the extent to which big Slovenian companies fulfil the requirements of the quota paints a slightly different picture. The fulfilment of the quota is monitored by the Fund for the Encouragement of Employment of Disabled People with the aim of increasing the number of employed disabled people. Statistical data shows that at the end of 2008, there was a 9 percent increase in the employment of disabled people compared to 2006, when the quota was introduced. Even if the number of companies that fulfil the quota is rising, nearly half still do not employ enough persons with disabilities. Of the 5,413 employers\(^10\) monitored by the Fund for the Encouragement

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\(^8\) Directorate of Invalids, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, 8 January 2010.


\(^10\) This figure includes companies that employ more than 20 workers and are obliged to employ persons with disabilities (the quota varies from 2–6 percent, depending on the type of business).
of Employment of Disabled People, in December 2008 nearly half (2,476) were paying a “fine” for not meeting the employment quota. The law also gives employers the option of entering into business contracts with invalid companies or employment centres to fulfil the quota. Since these types of organisations employ a lot of people with disabilities, companies can use this type of cooperation instead of employing workers with disabilities at their companies. In 2009, around one third (1,000) of the nearly 3,000 employers who fulfilled the quota had opted to do so by entering into a business contract with an invalid company or employment centre. Although the employment of disabled people has increased since the introduction of the quota (31,205 disabled people were employed at the beginning of 2006, compared to 33,901 in September 2008), the employment rate is growing more slowly than among the non-disabled.

While some of these figures have been used as evidence of successful employment policies, the ethnographic accounts present a different picture, and show that people with disabilities are prevented from entering better paid and socially gratifying jobs. This applies not only to the job market in general, even in the field of social work, a profession based on ethical principles rooted in the concepts of social justice and inclusion, people with disabilities seeking employment are turned away:

During 2008, a young, well-trained, friendly social worker with speech impairments was seeking a social work job at welfare agencies. Jobs were offered to her before the employers realised that she had mild speech impairments. She was a very competent social worker, and had received an award for her diploma thesis, but no social welfare organisations were willing to give her a job. The employers told her that they had changed their mind, or that the job was not being offered anymore, or that “they will ring her up next week” but then never actually called. (Personal communication, D.Z., 2009)

Another young graduate social worker with restricted growth had been looking for a job at a welfare agency in 2008. She was often turned away with the words “What do you want? You are a dwarf!” She later got a full-time job as an accountant in administration at an invalid company. After a year of intensive work outside her field of professional expertise, she experienced her first epileptic episode. To date, she hasn’t received another position within the company. (Personal communication, D.Z., 2009)

These examples show that people with disabilities are still a long way from being seen as equally desirable workers or included in ordinary employment, even among social workers. The situation becomes more blatant in cases where social work is involved in supporting people at sheltered workplaces which have some characteristics of an ordinary workplace (working hours etc.), for some people, these workshops constitute the only contact with the outside world apart from their immediate family. In line with medical compartmentalisation, legislation labels some people with diagnoses of intellectual disabilities or multifunctional impairments as “incapable for independent living and work” (Social Care of Physically and Mentally Disabled
Persons Act 1983, Art.111). They are offered work without the proper status of employees and, in most cases, almost without payment, as the monthly rewards for workers at sheltered workplaces amount to between 40 and 150 Euros (the average is less than 100 Euros). They are entitled to a disability allowance, a care allowance and institutional care, but are not entitled to enter any form of vocational rehabilitation because they have been labelled unemployable. These arrangements can be called semi-welfare jobs because they also serve as a sort of day care placement for people who live at home with their parents, hence some professionals informally refer to them as “adult kindergartens” (Zaviršek 2009).

Work in a sheltered workshop is an obligatory day activity for those who live in residential institutions or in group homes run by these institutions. Welfare job provision is therefore imbued with the restitutinal and workfare ideology based on the idea that welfare recipients have to meet certain requirements to continue to receive welfare benefits. These activities should improve their job prospects or contribute to the well-being of society as a whole. In this case, disabled people who live in residential institutions or group homes are required, as welfare recipients, to work in sheltered workshops in order to improve their work and social skills. This aim is inconsistent with the very mission of the sheltered workshops. People are given repetitive mechanical tasks (binding paper or cloth, connecting two different parts of an object such as a pen or a box etc.) and encouraged to do as much work as possible, without any focus on social skills and useful learning skills. Sheltered workshops therefore have a tripartite nature. They are a welfare provision for some people with severe disabilities and therefore viewed by the professionals as a “day care”, “respite care”, or “kindergarten” provision. At the same time they are offered as welfare jobs to persons with mild intellectual disabilities who would be able to work in ordinary employment but would need some job couching support. According to a recent study, up to 25 percent of all persons in sheltered workplaces in Slovenia have knowledge and skills to work in ordinary employment (Nagode 2008). Additionally, sheltered workplaces keep alive the wide spread institution-based structure of care for people with disabilities who are labelled as disabled in order to be eligible for some welfare benefits.

In recent years, sheltered workshops have become an extremely popular area of welfare work and a new form of the privatisation of welfare. In 2007, there were 587 persons working in sheltered workplaces in Slovenia; by 2008, there were already 2,621 persons working in sheltered workshops, and 3,016 by 2009. Of the growing number of sheltered workshops, 23

are public and 11 are private concessions.\(^\text{13}\) The majority of people working in sheltered workplaces live either in their own homes or in institutions for people with intellectual disabilities or the group homes attached to these public care institutions. Their daily work engagement does not support inclusion or equality, and they are not entitled to any vocational rehabilitation services or incentives for employment. Paradoxically, people who work in the sheltered workplaces are legally denied the ability to work and live independent lives, but are required to work in sheltered workplaces if they want to receive welfare benefits such as accommodation in a public care institution or group home.

It is obvious that the ideology that glorifies work as the major factor of social inclusion has to be called into question. Workfare and welfare jobs neither protect people from poverty nor ensure inclusion. This view is corroborated by the results of the 2009 Eurobarometer poll "Poverty and Social Exclusion", which inquires into public attitudes towards poverty in relation to people with disability among EU citizens\(^\text{14}\). Slovenian respondents see the reason for the risk of poverty in disability, long-term illnesses and mental health problems to a greater extent than the EU-27\(^\text{15}\). 39 percent of the respondents in Slovenia stated that people with disabilities are “most at risk of poverty” (compared with 29 percent for the EU-27), and 19 percent said that mental health problems cause the “risk of poverty” (compared with 13 percent for the EU-27). A similar discrepancy could be noted in responses to the question “why are people poor”. The Slovenian respondents saw disability and long-term illness as the causes of poverty (26 percent) significantly more often than the EU-27 (18 percent). The same general trend can be noted in the case of mental health problems, which, again, a significantly greater percentage of Slovenes view as the cause of poverty (11 percent compared to 5 percent for the EU-27).

The fact that Slovenian respondents saw a close connection between poverty and disability can be partly interpreted as a result of the traditional belief system and partly as a reflection of the actual economic situation of particular individuals and groups of people. Historically disability and poverty were inevitably connected, and paid work and disability were seen as incompatible. Disability was seen as the cause of poverty. At the same time, statistics on the monthly incomes and social transfers to people with disabilities in Slovenia show that many people with disabilities do in fact live below the poverty


\(^{15}\) The EU-27 is the average for the 27 member states of the European Union.
line. Therefore it is not surprising that disability and poverty are still closely connected in the minds of Slovenes and show the need for economic and recognitional redistributive changes in the society.

Ethical dilemmas pertaining to the imperative of work for people with disabilities

From the perspective of the ethics of disability, at least one of three conditions have to be ensured if work performed by people with disabilities is to have an inclusionary effect. First, work needs to be defined as an activity that is carried out for decent payment. This constitutes an indictment of all sheltered workplaces and other semi-work contracts where workers do not receive a monthly salary or their salary is below poverty line. Second, work needs to have a creative component which humanises and enriches the subject instead of being just repetitive labour. Third, people with disabilities should be actively supported and welcomed at respectable and intellectually demanding jobs.

Ancient Greek, Jewish and early Christian concepts of work were highly ambivalent towards work as a necessity (Granter 2009). In Ancient Greece, for example, physical work had a negative connotation: only un-free people had to work, while free men were active in the public sphere, in workfare and in politics. The Judaic ideas included competing beliefs, one of which stated that religious contemplation is work that does not demand any additional occupation, and another which stated that it does. Early Christian ideas saw work as both a consequence of the original sin (the Fall) and as a joy and a moral obligation. The moral obligation of work – an idea that was not widespread prior to the early European industrialisation of the seventeenth century – viewed work as the charitable activity for the needy and as something to occupy the mind, which might otherwise be distracted by improper thoughts. As the growth of the moral obligation and a positive attitude towards work was greatly influenced by the Protestant ethic, the old Christian saying “Those who do not work shall not eat”\(^{16}\) gained new force throughout Europe. During the industrialisation of European societies many “cripples”, and especially those who were poor or homeless, were seen as dishonest, responsible for their own miserable situation, lazy, and consequently worthy of punishment. Some people with disabilities tried to avoid the stigma of the label “undeserving poor” by carrying signs that read “I was born a cripple” to avoid being forcibly removed from the public space (Gleeson 1999).

This religious belief that work is an obligation to God was transformed into the capitalist work ethic of the 19. and the 20. Century. In the secularised states, the obligation to work spread through all social disciplines and affected the design of the asylums and mad-houses. Work was used as a means

\(^{16}\) Original in Slovenian language: Kdor ne dela naj ne jet
to improve and re-socialise people with disabilities and keep them under control. While emerging economic elites used the work ethic to discipline and educate workers in order to achieve modern production relations, the work in workhouses and asylums was used as a therapeutic tool to discipline the disabled within institutions. People who were seen as unable to work or who refused to work were perceived as irrational. The state asylums proclaimed that they were protecting people from their own irrationality and consequently from criminality. Occupational and work therapies in these spatially segregated places became part of the scientifically justified practices of healing and control.

While in religious conceptions work was seen as a tool for occupying thoughts which might otherwise drift towards immoral ideas, in secular conceptions the very same moral obligation of work was interpreted as occupational therapy and re-socialisation, in line with the view that most disabled people were morally responsible for their impairment. The work of people with disabilities was not seen as potentially profitable, but as an activity of moral improvement and medical therapy.

Taking into account this historical construction of persons deemed incapable of work who were nonetheless forced to perform some work activities, it becomes clear that today the right of work for people with disabilities is revolutionary and vitally important for social justice and equality.

Only a few decades ago, the work and economic and profit-oriented activities of disabled people in eastern Europe were watched with suspicion, and disabled people were punished if they were seen as economically independent. The moral image of a disabled person and the idea of profitable work performance were incompatible, as disabled people were defined as dependent recipients of care with a moral image of personal tragedy. Being disabled and economically successful was seen as subversive and morally dangerous.

Ethnographic accounts from the former Soviet Union convey life stories of economically independent disability activists who were criminalised and prevented from continuing their economic activities. In 1978, Jurij Kiseljew built a barrier-free house to serve his needs as an impaired person. The house was burned down by an unknown person, and he was criminalised when he wanted to repair it (Dunn and Dunn 1989). Another disability activist, Genadij Guskow, was punished and sent to a nursing home once he became a successful innovator for special vehicles and prosthetic devices for people with physical impairments. He established a small social company (a cooperative), employed other persons with physical impairments and became economically independent and even prosperous. Guskow was accused of being socially dangerous by local social institutions. His dissidence was closely related to his ability to live an economically successful life independent of public care institutions. His activities didn't confirm the moral stereotypes of the disabled as needy, economically incapable and less intelligent than the non-disabled population. It was
the Ministry for Social Protection that sent him to a nursing home located 700 miles away from his home. Even though he was only able to move around with the use of crutches, he was incarcerated with the help of armed policemen (Raymond 1989). The personal stories of these two men show that the past in which people with disabilities were not allowed to work is not all that distant. Looking from these historical evidences, it is easily to understand why the right to work that was denied in the past has become so vitally important.

Other historical examples, too, show how the creative work of people with disabilities, including innovations which would eliminate various barriers for disabled persons, was not taken seriously and actively fought against. One need but look at the revolutionary work of Luis Braille (1809–1852). Once Braille had developed (as a young man) a tactile system of writing for people with visual impairments, it took twenty years for the French authorities to officially recognise it (1844) and more than fifty years for other European countries to implement it (1878); Americans did not begin using Braille until nearly a century after its invention (1917) (Bavčar 2009: 10). Prior to the formal recognition of the Braille system, disabled children and adults who advocated for or even used it were ostracised and discriminated against.

The ethic of disability based on the moral idea that work itself promotes inclusion is based on the universal premise of the moral connotation of work in any form. This type of prescriptive moral knowledge is based on assumptions that are in many cases de-contextualised and unexamined, for example: work ensures a decent living; people with disabilities who work are more independent than those who don’t; work means social interactions with other people; work ensures that the disabled person lives in an ordinary environment (by driving to work, working etc.). In most developing countries, including the countries of eastern Europe, these are false assumptions, derived from the moral knowledge of the non-disabled without being verified by people with disabilities themselves. Therefore, it is of crucial importance that the ethics of disability be based on ethnographic, empirical inquiries into disabled peoples’ experiences as a source of knowledge from which social workers could draw moral values and principles. Despite this practice wisdom, which has been promoted by well-known disabled and non-disabled activists and researchers for some time, little has changed in social work in eastern Europe or elsewhere. The ethics of work is just one area where ideas about what a good quality of life is and what a good life is supposed to be are defined by the non-disabled and by a disability elite speaking in the name of “all disabled people” and is often used by policy makers to justify their decisions.

Scully suggested that, in addition to the ethics of disability, there is a need to consider what she calls “disability ethics”. She defines disability ethics as a “form of ethical analysis consciously and conscientiously attentive to the experience of being/having a ‘different’ embodiment” (2008: 11). The focus of disability ethics is the experience of impairment that derives from people's
personal experiences of the impairment itself. She speaks about the “embodied effect of impairment” (ibid.). Drawing an analogy with feminist ethics, which looks at how gendered embodiment affects human relationships, interpretations and judgements, disability ethics looks at how the “embodied effect of impairment” affects the everyday life of people with disabilities. Feminist ethics has shown that gender normativity never sees the gendered body as a neutral, but always as the embodied gender (it is not the “human being” that enters the room, but the “Woman”). Similarly, the normativity of the normal/healthy body does not perceive a person as a “neutral human”, but as “Disabled”. The current ideology of work must be examined from this perspective: Does it really bring about inclusion? Should it be prioritised over other vital areas of people's lives, such as independent living, family life, etc., or does its prevalence come from the fact that it suits the policy makers who utilise it for various purposes?

Conclusions

It is a paradox that paid and unpaid work are seen as the major criteria for the inclusion of people with disabilities at a time when 5 to 12 percent of the population of the European Union – or even as much as 70 percent in some countries and communities, such as the Roma and Shinti in Kosovo – is unemployed. Instead of looking at different types of discrimination, social workers and other professionals are influenced by the ideology of work and the work ethic and are not challenging the medical and rehabilitation model of disability, which, while it does provide more job opportunities, relies predominantly on semi-segregated and precarious work places and occupational activities without payment for people with disabilities.

Despite the mainstreaming of employment and the success achieved in this area in the UK, Germany and other (mostly western) countries, people with disabilities face poverty more frequently than non-disabled people; conversely, children, adults and older people living in conditions of poverty can easily become disabled. Furthermore, where it has been achieved, mainstreaming has affected a limited range of people with disabilities; it therefore must be considered alongside the fact that today people with intellectual or multiple disabilities are being steered towards welfare employment in greater numbers than ever before. In countries where the work ethic is strongly imbedded in the dominant value system, stigma is attached not only to poverty, but to the question of whether someone has a place of work or not. The notion of a person's contribution being made through a nineteenth-century western conception of work (or similar ethical concepts – Confucianism, for example) has recently been challenged by Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) activists and academics from all over the world who believe that, instead of non-rewarding types of work and stigmatising welfare cash transfers,
a basic universal income could be the future solution to increasing the meaningful participation of every person (van Parijs 1992).

In some countries, vocational rehabilitation laws dominate the disability debate, and employment is framed within medical and needs-oriented laws which expect a number of professionals to evaluate the person with a disability during different stages of the mostly temporary employment processes. Welfare employment gives some freedom to the relatives of the disabled person, but there is no evidence that this type of employment, where disabled people make embroideries while professionals get involved in social enterprise activities to sell them at social work conferences, increases a person’s choices and contributes to their meaningful participation and inclusion in the community. Without incorporating diverse experiences of disabled people themselves into social work teaching and practice, the ethics of disability will bring about new inequality and new ethical dilemmas.

References


Chapter 7

Pursuing a Vision for Social Justice: Ethical dilemmas and critical imperatives in the South African context

Linda Harms Smith

Introduction

It may be true to say that in South Africa, the struggle for social justice was subsumed by the project of political emancipation. The end of Apartheid seems to have brought freedom and equality in the ideal rather than in the material sense – to abstracted rather than real subjects (Brown 1995: 106). While significant changes have occurred in statutes and institutional arrangements, structural levels of inequality and oppression are still among the highest in the world (Smith 2008, see also Sewpaul 2006, Desai 2004, Terreblanche 2002). Social workers face this post-colonial, post-Apartheid context with both a moral duty and a vision for social justice (Hugman 2003). However, global neoliberal capitalism has dictated the path of social change, and the market is seen as the template for solving society's problems. Solutions for social problems are framed in the “depoliticised vocabulary of the therapeutic and emotional, and the discourse of self help, personal responsibility and self-reliance operate” (Giroux 2008: 156).

If ethics discourse in social work fails to act as interlocutor towards a radical position of concern for the structural and material conditions of social life, it merely serves further oppression and deepening social injustice (Hugman 2003, see also Ferguson 2007). This paper discusses social work in the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South African context of neoliberalism. It also describes, as an ethical problem, the preoccupation of social work in South Africa with social development and the failure of the profession to respond adequately to structural conditions of oppression and inequality. Examples of statements from South African social work practice are given, and appropriate ethics, which would serve the project of an egalitarian future where the real and the ideal converge, are proposed.

South African Apartheid: Social work and beyond

Racial discrimination, denigration of indigenous beliefs and practices, paternalism in social services and the distorted nature of social welfare policies
favouring whites as the welfare elite, were laid during colonial times (Patel 2005). Apartheid, together with the legacy of colonialism, afflicted South African society with internalised oppression and iniquitous power dynamics. All areas of life were subjected to curtailment and infiltration, including freedom of movement, expression of opinion, assembly, social networks, family and community life; and finally the obliteration of the past and falsification of history. The psyche and social relations became the locus of control and domination (Bulhan 1985:122).

During the Apartheid era, social workers were often complicit in the maintenance of the system. Only a small sector of the social work profession (mainly in the informal welfare sector) resisted the oppressive regime. This was especially evident during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process, when social workers and representatives from NGOs came forward with their perceptions of experiences during the Apartheid era (Patel 2005: 78).

Although the alternative social development movements had a radical and transformative nature, Apartheid social welfare was tied to the political and economic objectives of the time (ibid.), services were oriented towards social control and adaptation to an unjust social system (McKendrick 1987). The responses of social workers were fraught with extreme ethical contradictions and conflict. Most social workers seemed to adopt a narrow focus on the “here and now” of the individual, trying to alleviate current problems of living – often, by omission and commission, they themselves were guilty of racist practices. In other cases, short of revolutionary, anti-oppressive actions, social workers adopted “sensitivity approaches” (that is, a stance of respect toward diverse cultures and ethnic groups) in order to resist the dictates of the repressive system.

Those exceptions where social workers engaged in subversive tactics, worked at conscientisation, mobilised against the political order or the day and participated in ‘grassroots’ community action and struggle towards liberation, were met with harsh repressive tactics by the state, such as victimisation, intimidation, and detention without trial (Taback 1991, see also Patel 2005). Social workers certainly did contribute to the national liberation agenda and the democratic movement, participating, as early as the 1970s, in community programs inspired by the work of Paulo Freire (Hope and Timmel 1995) and

1 European (Dutch) colonisation began in the 1650’s, and proceeded through the 1800’s with the arrival of the British. South Africa became a Union in 1910, formalised racist Apartheid policies in 1948, and broke away from Britain and became a republic in 1961. The first democratic government was elected in 1994.

2 The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up by the Government of National Unity to help deal with what had happened under Apartheid. The TRC was based on the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No 34 of 1995 (http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/).
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Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement (Biko 1978). Radical students and social workers worked to expand social work into community work and reached out to oppressed communities, relying on and strengthening the powers of civil society for survival and resistance to oppression (Gunnarsen 2001, cited by Bak 2004: 85). Some social workers also resisted the apartheid system in 'morally active' ways. In the late 1980s, mainstream social workers united for change, and, at a historic meeting in Cape Town, rejected the racially divided social welfare system (Gray 1996, cited by Bak 2004: 85). By 1989, during the height of Apartheid repression, an alternate model of social service delivery emerged (Taback 1991). These services were characterised by the location of service delivery in the social, economic and political context and the prioritisation of felt needs, were non-racist, promoted social, political and economic awareness, utilised advocacy, and critically challenged the nature of social services.

The emergence of this alternative model of service delivery during the Apartheid era is significant and insightful for present day social work as it faces ethical issues in the current context. Ethical values which led social workers to resist the repressive Apartheid regime are similarly needed in the current context of continued structural oppression, racism and internalised oppression (Terreblanche 2002, see also Smith 2004, Holscher and Sewpaul 2006).

Since political liberation, the South African development agenda has received high priority, with the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997)3 being the guiding policy document for social welfare services. While the achievement of the goals of the developmental approach is clearly necessary for the South African context, uncritical neglect of socialist-collectivist perspectives consisting of transformational, radical and structural approaches (Payne 2005) seems to be problematic.

In their evaluation of the progress made with the implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) in facilitating the transformation from a remedial social welfare model towards a developmental one, Patel et al. (2008) concluded that although positive developments had been noted in the reorientation of services towards a developmental approach, much change was still required. Remedial and pathology-oriented interventions, statutory services and residential care were found to be increasing, and continued to be the main models of intervention. These models are limited in their ability to respond effectively to mass poverty, the impact of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, a lack of social cohesion, social exclusion and social disintegration.

3 The White Paper (1997) sets out the principles, guidelines, proposed policies and programmes for developmental social welfare in South Africa. As the primary policy document, the White Paper serves as the foundation for social welfare in the post-1994 era (Department of Social Welfare 1997).
The goals of promoting social and economic development, facilitating participation, improving quality of life, building human capabilities, promoting social integration and promoting human rights (Patel 2005, see also Midgely 1995, Patel et al. 2008) are clearly important. However, the development approach, which is largely part of the “individualist/reformist perspective”, generally aims to maintain the social order (Payne 2005). To challenge and transform the social order and to pursue social justice, the morally active practitioner would need to pursue more socialist/collectivist approaches.

Furthermore, South Africa finds itself in a uniquely complex entanglement of the post-colonial4, the post-Apartheid and global neoliberalism. The subtle continuation of historical colonialism with strong, but largely hidden, racist and ethnocentric undercurrents is evidenced by global resource consumption and wealth distribution. South Africa is said to have officially embraced neoliberalism with the adoption of GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy) in 1996, which shifted many of the redistributive policies of the RDP (Redistribution and Development Programme)5 which had played a part in ushering in liberation and new freedom for the people (Desai 2003, see also Sewpaul 2006).

The popular developmental approach is thus framed within the context of the GEAR and its neoliberal ideology based on individualism, corporate competitiveness and profit making. This does not augur well for social work and its professional commitment to social justice (Sewpaul 2006: 428). Similarly, in her evaluation of the progress of social development in South Africa, Gray emphasises that developmental social work must be structural social work (2006: 63). More than development is needed, since the focus on community responsibility for development draws attention away from government responsibility for social development. The pursuit of developmental social welfare service objectives which maintain the status quo, as opposed to radical and structural social work approaches, thus itself provides an ethical dilemma for the South African social worker.

Ethical Dilemmas and tensions in South African social work

South African social workers are faced with a particular set of entanglements (Mbembe 2001) relating to colonisation, Apartheid and capitalist economic

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4 This does not refer to the chronological end of colonization, but rather to its ongoing effects. According to Askeland and Payne, post-colonialism refers to “the ways in which the domination of colonies by Western colonial countries did not disappear with the passing of European empires in the 1950–70 period” (2006: 732).

5 The RDP was the policy upon which the newly elected ANC based its economic and social commitment to the people of South Africa at the time of the transition to democracy in 1994.
systems. Ethical dilemmas and tensions in social work arise from the “system-stabilising and normative role of social work and its general unwillingness to challenge the impacts of structural disadvantages on the lives of service users” (Holscher and Sewpaul 2006: 258). Constantly having to ignore and feel powerless about the stark realities of the context in which social work practice occurs creates ongoing tension for social workers. Internalisation of these oppressive realities seems to lead to inaction and paralysis.

Hegemonic culture and knowledge development (Askeland and Payne 2006); the dialectical nature of the personal and structural levels of intervention; and the consequences of neoliberal economic policies further exacerbate the difficulty of embracing morally active professional identities and positions. However, social workers in South Africa have at times demonstrated courageous resistance to oppressive regimes and the order of the day. It is on this legacy of critical engagement that dialogue, critical reflection and action centred on ethical values and principles can build.

Reflecting on South Africa's difficult past and its ongoing legacy, it must be acknowledged that social workers also struggle with subjectivities and socialised positions. As Bourdieu explains, the social agent has a socialised subjectivity, and there exists an “operating presence of the whole past of which it is a product” (Costa 2006: 877). For this reason, expectations of obedience to rules such as those found in ethical codes are problematic. Ethical dilemmas, decision making and actions result from socialisations and positions, and cannot merely be dealt with behaviourally through such codes. Some examples of areas of ethical conflict and contradiction in current social work practice are described in the following section.

Social justice, structural change and political involvement

“How far do I take the extent of my ‘political’ involvement in the face of the risk to my personal security and well-being? I was taught that ‘politics’ and social work don’t go together, but how can anything social be separated from politics?”

In Apartheid South Africa, “politics” was viewed as being dangerous and subversive – as a real threat to personal security, with detentions without trial and state harassment commonplace. This environment led to a discourse of danger and risk surrounding any act of solidarity or expression of dissent. Social work, on the other hand, is deeply linked to social change efforts, and thus cannot escape political expression and involvement.

Political involvement remains contentious, although it now pursues new causes and values. Because these are rooted in and reflective of important needs and interests of certain groups and classes, advocating alternative social values that threaten the status quo tends to be met with censure by those who see their interests as threatened (Drower 1996: 142).
HIV/AIDS and orphanhood

“I have to help this young 12 year old child of a sibling-headed household to take better care of her brothers and arrange food parcels for them, but I know that I am helping her lose her childhood and that this is not how things should be.”

With an increasing number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS seeking foster care, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is placing enormous pressure on an already overburdened child welfare system. Social workers are grappling with heavy caseloads of up to 400 children per worker. In this regard, perceived declines in the productivity of social workers are ascribed to “high case loads, emotional and other trauma experienced by social workers in service delivery, high stress levels due to management and societal demands, and lack of resources to deliver their mandate” (Department of Social Development 2006: 20).

Bureaucratic demands

“I am inundated with demands around statutory work such as foster care placements – I feel as if I am just a bureaucrat churning out administrative requirements to meet people’s financial needs. I don’t get to do any quality therapeutic or preventive work…”

High caseloads, especially relating to statutory child protection services and alternative care placements, consume much of South African social workers’ time. Due to inadequate resources and shortages of social workers, workloads are unmanageable and quality is compromised for quantity. “Statutory services and institutional care continue to constitute the bulk of social work practice, while the rendering of developmental and preventative services depends largely on the creativity of social workers in utilizing gaps that may open from time to time in their statutory routines” (Holscher and Sewpaul 2006: 255).

Poverty, inequality and neoliberal macroeconomic policies

“I feel so overwhelmed by the levels of poverty and inequality that I just concentrate on micro practice with the here-and-now of the client that I am faced with – the free market and its promise of prosperity for all seems impossible to challenge at a macro level.”

In terms of inequality of income distribution, South Africa is ranked 121 out of the 177 countries listed in the Human Development Index, with a Gini coefficient of 57.8 (UNDP 2007). Leite et al. (2006) describe how earnings inequality has risen or remains high across various categories of workers, particularly based on race, education or rural/urban differentiations. They maintain that although earnings inequality rose sharply in 1995–1999, and then declined marginally, it remained high during 2000–2004. Economic growth
has been correlated with rising inequality (Leite, McKinley and Osorio 2006: 24). Yet, reliance on the free market continues to be presented to the population as the solution to problems of poverty.

Child well-being

“I try to render appropriate services to ‘this’ child, now, while acting in denial and ignore the broader problems of the well-being of children and the violation of their rights.”

Various attempts are being made in South Africa to respond to the structural problems faced by children. Indicators of child well-being linked to a rights-based approach have been devised to track the impact of services and programme interventions and to monitor children's rights and address the needs of vulnerable groups and children in high-risk situations. “As South Africa works towards fulfilling its commitments to children, it is crucial that child poverty is measured, and addressed, within the wider contexts of children's rights and child well-being” (Dawes, Bray and van der Merwe 2007: 71).

Post-1994 South Africa has demonstrated a specific commitment to the safety and protection of the well-being of children, as demonstrated by Section 28 of the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution (2006), The United Nations and the African charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999), and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995. However, the extreme levels of deprivation, poverty and social consequences of orphanhood continue to challenge the achievement of those ideals.

Western cultural hegemony and indigenous practices

“My social work training was based in Western models of intervention. I respect traditional cultural or religious practices, but find some of the practices that communities or clients choose to practice to be incongruent with the traditional social work values that I was taught.”

The existing knowledge base for social work has emerged from epistemologies that are an expression of European historical and cultural development (Graham 1999). The inappropriate use of imported Anglo-American social work models, on which a great deal of mainstream social work practice in South Africa is based, may even constitute a form of cultural or professional imperialism (Mackintosh 1991).

Furthermore, the Eurocentric nature of the underlying knowledge base of social work continues to assume that this knowledge has universal application (Graham 1999). According to Mupedziswa, the western roots of social work have meant that theories tended to be adopted from western theorists and practitioners, reflecting western academic analyses (1992: 21). Of particular concern is the emphasis on individualism as opposed to the communal/
relational nature of being (Mkhize 2008). This form of cultural “invasion” is oppressive and counters the aims of social work. Freire (1970: 150) describes how cultural invasion, which occurs when an oppressive group penetrates the cultural context of another group, inhibits the creativity of the invaded group. They become convinced of their “intrinsic inferiority” and become alienated from the values of their own culture. Thus European culture and colonialism “are deeply implicated in each other” (Young 1990). It also follows that if foreign values predominate, then the practice will be of little relevance for people to whom these values are alien. Social work practice must be based on the cultural milieu of the society in which it evolved and must use the conceptualisation of human beings of that society (Osei-Hwedi 1996).

Critical conscientisation

“If I work towards facilitating critical consciousness, how do I prevent people from feeling anger and pain at the reality that they discover about the world and their circumstances?”

One of Freire’s principles of radical and transformative pedagogy is the involvement of emotion around pressing social issues. These “generative themes” lead people to be critically reflective, challenge the status quo and take action (praxis). According to Freire, critical conscientisation is learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (Freire 1970: 15).

Social workers may find themselves avoiding the path of critical conscientisation, perhaps because of an awareness that such structural analysis and changed ways of seeing may lead to dissatisfaction and renewed commitment to social action. “Critical discourses in the profession remain marginal, and structural social work or other forms of anti-oppressive practice are rare” (Sewpaul 2006).

Individualisation or focus on the collective

“I am confused about the extent to which I encourage a client towards self-determination, knowing that the broader, extended family has a right to participate in decisions that the client may make.”

Valuing the individual client as part of a collective is important in the South African context. The western philosophy of individualism is at odds with this value. Bar-On (1999:12) maintains that social work, emanating from America and Europe, tended to support assumptions about the meaning of life derived from the Judeo-Christian ethos and the capitalist mode of production: Each person is a moral entity, free from relationships, context and history. As an entity free to choose how to conduct life, dependency is devalued. On the other hand, in African thought personhood is defined in relation to the
community where people are mutually responsive to one another's needs (Mkhize 2008).

Generally the communalist perspective receives insufficient attention in existing social work codes of ethics (Healy 2004: 24). Individualism diminishes the importance of caring, reciprocity, community building, generosity and co-operation embodied in the African philosophy of *ubuntu*. Jacob, Joseph and van Rooyen (1991: 249) argue that social workers tend to subscribe to western codes of ethics based on individualism in keeping with capitalist ideology, and makes a plea for a Marxist ideological stance wherein the collective good of the majority is of prime importance and the value of social justice predominates.

**Income generation and macro-economic policies**

“I know that people need to have food and so food gardens seem like a good development project to enhance individual well-being and freedom from hunger, but without challenging the exploitative capitalist system I actually contribute to the perpetuation of the ongoing struggles of the poor.”

Apartheid South African racial capitalism continues its legacy through extreme levels of racialised inequality. Sen argues that although individual agency and freedom is central to addressing all forms of social, economic and political deprivations, “the freedom of agency that we individually have is inescapably qualified and constrained by the social, political and economic opportunities that are available to us” (1999: xi-xii). The shift in economic policies from the redistributive RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) to the GEAR (Growth Employment and Redistribution strategy), which emphasises individualism, corporate competitiveness and profit making, ushered in an era of further exacerbation of poverty (Sewpaul 2006: 482). The social worker is faced with the dilemma of supporting, through income generation activities, the status quo rather than challenging neoliberal economic policies.

**Critical ethics and values for South African Social Work**

Ethics and values for social work must arise from the context in which they are inherent. Although globalisation has resulted in agreement on the universal nature of human rights and social justice, unique contexts require unique commitments. The South African context is a complex fusion of historical and current structural oppressions; struggles for social justice; and the indomitable hope for social change. The post-Apartheid and post-colonial South African context therefore requires a unique set of critical ethics and values.

In South Africa, difficult ethical dilemmas were forged during the Apartheid era, when social workers were forced to render services within the
oppressive and unjust system. The potent historical combination of oppressive colonialism, institutionalised racism and economic exploitation demands a particular response from social workers. As an ethical profession, social work will inevitably be faced with ethical dilemmas. However, it is the moral impulse described by Hugman (2003: 1027) that must give rise to ethics. The human condition is one of moral ambivalence and is irreparably contradictory. Developing a set of critical ethics in the South African context should be linked to what it means to be a *morally active practitioner* (Husband 1995, cited by Hugman 2003: 1037):

- Emphasis on principles and values and a reluctance to be tightly prescriptive.
- Embracing diversity and being multi-cultural in every sense of that term.
- Being prepared to struggle with contradictions and seeing every *aporia* as both inevitable and fruitful.
- Pursuing a “morally active” role and not simply following the guidelines of a code of ethics.
- Recognition of the contextual nature of practice and the importance of “both/and” in relation to core values.

Acting morally and ethically is also related to being reflexive and critical. And where social workers have been educated into a domesticated, hegemonic discourse inappropriate for local contexts, this will be a difficult task. On the other hand, critically conscientised social workers will strive to adopt more radical and politicised positions in order to achieve moral and ethical practice. If South African social workers want to engage in ethical practice and more than superficial “remediation”, they will have to develop a critical consciousness and a social work of resistance (Freire 1970, see also Ledwith 2001, Ferguson and Lavalette, 2004).

**The South African Code of Ethics**

The Code of Ethics of the South African Council of Social Service Professions (2006) regulates behaviour and provides guidelines for carrying out social work duties. The code makes a clear statement about social justice:

> Social workers challenge social injustice. Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, families, groups and communities. Their efforts are focused inter alia on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination and other forms of injustice. (SACSSP 2006)

However, the greater part of the code of ethics is devoted to issues pertaining to therapeutic interventions with individual service users. It goes on to describe social workers’ ethical responsibilities to broader society:

> Social workers engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to
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develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice (SACSSP 2006).

However, codes of ethics and guidelines focusing on the behavioural aspects of social work intervention can be problematic. Adherence to such codes driven by the external motivation of consequences attached to “unethical conduct” detracts from the intrinsic, internalised commitment to values and principles (Bellefeuille and Hemingway 2006, see also Holscher and Sewpaul 2006). “Ethical practice that relies heavily on professional codes of ethics can lull practitioners to sleep in matters that require critical reflection and discretionary judgment” (Bellefeuille and Hemingway 2006: 3).

Critical ethics for a ‘new’ South Africa

Ethical dilemmas cannot be dealt with through adherence to ethical codes of conduct, but through reflection and action in the form of praxis (Holscher and Sewpaul 2006). The following discussion presents some ideas to stimulate dialogue and contribute to discourse and reflection on ethical dilemmas and praxis. They arise from some of the many ethical dilemmas faced by social workers in South Africa today.

The imperative of political involvement

Political involvement is essential for social workers (Craig 2002, see also Gray and Mazibuko 2002, Mmatli 2008). This specifically means mobilisation, lobbying, participating in electoral politics and other social action activities. Various political roles are proposed for social workers (Craig 2002):

• Accumulation and dissemination of evidence.
• Facilitating and advocating for those most on the margins of society.
• Applying principles of social justice to organisations.
• Finding critical political distance from a position of being merely agents of government change.
• Focusing on empowerment and advocacy and promoting user involvement.

In this regard, the Draft International Policy on Poverty Alleviation and the Role for Social Workers (IFSW 2008) states that social workers must work together to abolish the social conditions that contribute to economic inequalities by challenging unjust policies and practices at every level.

Costa cites Bourdieu, who claims that social change is conceivable and possible and urges the researcher’s (social worker’s) intervention in the political environment, taking into account the positions that a specific social worker occupies in relation to the social world (Costa 2006: 878). Reflexivity and constant vigilance about such positions (race, class and gender), ideas
and assumptions are encouraged: “One should not be afraid to encourage a systematic prejudice against all fashionable ideas” (Bourdieu et al. 1991, cited by Karakayali 2004: 358).

In this regard, Costa (2006: 884) describes Bourdieu’s view that the intellectual, through his/her intervention, must contribute knowledge to promote action aimed at producing changes in society. Putting knowledge about mechanisms generating social inequalities, exclusions and domination relationships into circulation to reach those in positions of exclusion and privation is an inescapable responsibility, equal to “aiding people in danger” (ibid.).

Holism and synthesis of the subjective and structural dialectic

Archer asserts that a synthesis between the dynamics of the subjective and the structural must be found (2003: 15). This synthesis may be achieved through critical reflexivity. She argues that one cannot transcend the divide between subjectivity and objectivity in order to understand the practices and contexts of life. An understanding and explanation of our practices can only be achieved by exploring the nexus (consisting of our internal conversations) between causal powers of the social and causal powers exercised by the agent (ibid.).

It is therefore important that social workers have a knowledge base which incorporates the subjective and psychological with the structural and social.

The combination of a value base of respect, empowerment and social justice; the emphasis on a relationship between worker and service user founded on trust and non-judgmental acceptance; a knowledge base which embraces both developmental psychology and also an understanding of social structures and social processes; and a repertoire of methods ranging from individual counselling to advocacy and community work; all these give social work an holistic perspective which makes it unique amongst the helping professions (Ferguson 2007: 20).

Critical conscientisation, reflexivity and praxis

The current South African post-Apartheid and post-colonial context consists of a unique set of internalised and structural oppressions of race, class and gender (Smith 2008: 381). This context requires critical consciousness, which offers hope for radical change and transformation. According to Freire, it is about “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (1970: 15). This “taking action” is related to the idea of praxis, which may also be considered an ethical principle and value, and is invaluable to the project of social change and transformation. Praxis relates to reflecting upon and translating transformative action into knowledge and converting knowledge into transformative action (McLaren 2001).
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This circuit between transformative action and knowledge is seen as essential in the breaking up of structural mechanisms of domination and oppression. However, it is not enough to remain with the realm of the idea. "The passage from idea to action is not automatic; nor does action inspired by a correct vision of reality ensure of itself that it will be effective in producing desired results" (Costa 2006: 887). Bourdieu describes such change of vision or critical conscientisation as a rupture and conversion of vision, providing "new eyes". He maintains that "this is not possible without a true conversion, a metanoia, a mental revolution, a change in the entire vision of the social world" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, cited by Costa 2006: 882).

Radical transformation and challenging the status quo

Social workers must find ways to engage in radical and transformative practice. Social work that remains focused on the remedial and preventive is guilty of being complicit with oppressive social forces. Constant vigilance about a commitment to such transformation and social change must accompany the daily practice of social workers.

In Apartheid South Africa, this omission was clear and part of the historical indictment of social work's undergirding of the oppressive and unjust system. In a submission to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the public acknowledgements of the social work higher education environment included the admission that it had "neglected to educate social work students with a radical perspective, which locates the challenges of vulnerable people within social, political and economic structures. Students were insufficiently educated in social action and as agents of social change" (Sacco and Hofmann 2004: 162).

Radicalism nourished by the critical spirit is always creative. It involves increasing commitment to the position that has been chosen, and greater engagement in the effort to transform concrete, objective reality (Freire 1970).

Resistance against cultural hegemony

Social workers must go beyond being "culturally competent" or "respectful of culture". The mere adaptation of existing models of social work to include ethnic realities could even become a form of cultural oppression if the "hegemony of eurocentric knowledge is ignored" (Graham 1999: 255). There should be an active resistance against all forms of cultural hegemony.

Hegemonic discourse, especially in the post-colonial context, has the power to infiltrate and supersede local, indigenous knowledge and wisdom: "Hegemony is the process whereby ideas, structures and actions come to be seen by the majority of people as wholly natural, preordained and working for their own good, when in fact they are constructed and transmitted by
powerful minority interest to protect the status quo that serves those interests” (Brookfield 1995, cited in Askeland and Payne 2006: 733).

A critical awareness of such hegemonic discourse is necessary for any transformational and empowerment practice. Social workers must critically self-reflect on their own discourse and knowledge base and actively resist such cultural hegemony. Ross (2008) maintains that South African social workers may face ethical dilemmas around cultural practices and advocates for the development of an indigenous Afro-centric model of social work to promote healing. Ross (ibid.: 393) cites Gray and Allegretti (2002): “South African social workers often deal with cultural beliefs that challenge conventional social work wisdom and have much to teach the rest of the world about multi-cultural social work.”

**Resistance against racism**

The particular South African context of institutionalised racism and ongoing insidious forms of racism demands a particularly vigilant and resistant stance from social workers. White race privilege, protected by laws, customs and traditions, led to a deeply embedded racist ethos which helped to justify the loss of feeling among whites for human fellowship with blacks6 (Mbembe 2007: 7).

Racial categorising was and continues to be a common basis of the identification of the self and the other in social interaction in South Africa (as well as many international sites). During Apartheid, race was a basis of determining legal and political rights, areas of residence, and distribution of resources (Collier 2005). Apartheid was originally designed to reify social, economic, and material privilege for ‘white’ South Africans and to deny political recourse to ‘black’ South Africans. Because of the persistence of systems of racism and ideologies of whiteness in South Africa (Duncan 2003), analysis and action to explicitly address the oppressions at the nexuses of race, class and gender remain a critical imperative.

**Radical resistance and support for social movements**

The issue of human suffering caused by oppression, poverty and hunger, social and economic inequality and inaccessible resources in the face of abun-

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6 In South Africa, Apartheid’s institutionalised racism categorised people into four groups: “whites”, “africans”, “coloureds” (who, according to the Population Registration Act, were deemed neither ‘white’ nor ‘african’) and “indians”. “Africans” were further categorised into ethnic groupings according to language such as Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho. In Apartheid ideological discourse, the term “Africans” generally did not refer to the inhabitants of the continent of Africa, but was used primarily as a marker of “racial” identity (Duncan 2003).
dance and conspicuous consumption is an important moral issue. Sewpaul (2006: 430) cites Dominelli (2004), who argues that the world's inequalities are simply indefensible from a moral point of view and that the relative absence of the moral dimension in political and economic discourses cannot be condoned. The redistribution of income, power, property and opportunities for the sake of greater social justice is a value in its own right (Terreblanche 2002: 445).

Government must be challenged on the lack of service delivery; the privatisation of state assets; and greater commodification and denial of essential services: “It is to these challenges that African scholars and social workers must rise: confronting and deconstructing capitalism’s ideological persuasion, walking along with people whom we work with in the struggle towards an alternative world based on redistributive justice” (Sewpaul 2006: 431).

Powell proposes radical resistance as an option for providing humanitarian care and further democratising society along socialist lines (2001: 155). Another option is the social inclusion approach, which empowers service users as citizens and provides social work with an opportunity to “reinvent the historic mission of social work in the vernacular of the time” (ibid.: 165). Participation in social action activities with emerging social movements is an important role for social work.

Reclaiming humanity for the excluded and ‘the other’

Freire (1970) maintains that the central problem of society is that of humanisation. Efforts to achieve transformation and liberation centre on this key concept. Briskman and Cemlyn maintain that social work should reclaim some of its lost ground and lead the way in “loving humanity” as part of a social justice and human rights discourse (2005: 714). A recent focus on the plight of refugees and asylum seekers internationally and in South Africa confronts social workers with questions about their role and response. Racism and the antagonistic state policies for dealing with these situations reflect the hostility and animosity experienced by these groups of people. The context of scarce resources, economic deprivation, and threats to survival exacerbate this antagonism in communities.

Worth of individuals as part of a collective

In keeping with capitalist ideology, a focus on individualism is often the basis for ethics and human rights discourse (Jacob, Joseph and van Rooyen 1991: 250). The excessive focus on the individual, as well as the emphasis placed on individual self-actualisation, detracts from the importance of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all people. The concept of ubuntu is well
known in the South African context and provides an understanding of what it means to be integrally connected to a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) takes the concept of ubuntu as one of its guiding principles.

Disempowerment and alienation, as a consequence of structural oppressions and exploitation, call for a valuing of the collective, also as a principle of radical and critical social work practice: “If alienation is centrally about the loss of power and control which people experience under capitalism, then challenging alienation involves regaining some control over our lives and over our work” (Ferguson and Lavalette 2004: 309).

Truth telling

Truth telling is an important value and ethic for social workers, especially when it relates to speaking out about injustice, oppression and hegemonic or “taken-for-granted” knowledge. Arendt describes this act of truth telling in the presence of political lies and deception as a social or political moment which marks the beginning of action: “Where a community has embarked upon organized lying on principle, and not only with respect to particulars, can truthfulness as such, unsupported by the distorting forces of power and opinion, become a political factor of the first order. Where everybody lies about everything of importance the truthteller, whether he knows it or not, has begun to act” (Arendt 1961).

Similarly, Foucault refers to such truthtelling as a parrhesiastic act. Such acts of speaking out about the truth counter hegemonic discourse and may thus be viewed as “dangerous”. Truthtelling is a verbal activity and duty whereby the speaker uses his/her freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, and moral duty instead of self-interest and apathy (Foucault 2001). The parrhesiastic act tells truths that challenge the status quo and its power relations and, as an ethical principle, enables the social worker to engage in action rather than remain at the level of reflection.

Conclusion

Contradiction and conflicting views are inherent in the nature of ethics in social work. The commitments and values which give rise to the possibility of conflicting decisions and dilemmas are linked to the various positions and

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7 **Ubuntu** is a concept commonly known in South Africa. It is explained by the proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which is a Xhosa expression of a notion that is common to all African languages and traditional cultures: A person is a person through other persons (Shuttle 1994:46). It is the relationship between himself/herself and others that defines a person. The idea is a contested one, but it has been appropriated for use in popular, romanticised notions of a singular Africanness.
subjectivities of the morally active practitioner. What is important is the willingness to constantly be vigilant about views and ideas and to engage in critical reflection and action. Ferguson also cautions against the exclusive reliance on the ethical dimension of social work, as it may act as a substitute for rigorous critical analysis of social work’s role within the state and society (2007: 135).

The South African context gives rise to a specific set of difficult ethical dilemmas when considering the entanglement of the post-colonial, post-apartheid and neoliberal economic frameworks. The noxious intersections of internalised oppression, poverty and extreme levels of inequality require social workers to examine their own positions, struggles and transactions in order to remain morally active and critical of social injustice.

However, as stated by Holscher and Sewpaul, it is not about producing a set of “ought to” and “how to” recommendations: “We believe that dealing with our own embeddedness and that of our colleagues is far more complex than this. It requires regard for how deeply all of us are implicated in the contradictions of welfare. What we need is to create the space for reflection (alone and collectively), for dialogue and subsequent action” (2006: 265).

This paper is just one attempt among many to encourage such dialogue and opportunities for critical reflection, analysis and action.

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PART III

Perspectives in teaching, practice and research
Chapter 6
From Professional Ethics to Ethics in Professional Life
Reflections on Learning and Teaching in Social Work
Sarah Banks

Introduction
This chapter offers some reflections on features of the traditional professional ethics literature used for teaching in the English-speaking world, which tends to focus on codes, conduct and rational decision making in difficult cases. It is argued that this kind of approach offers a rather artificial, abstract and narrow conception of ethics. Consideration is then given to what might be the implications for learning and teaching of shifting emphasis towards a more embedded conception of ethics in professional life, with a focus on the commitment and character of professional practitioners and the specificities of the contexts in which they work.

Professional ethics

Literature in the field of professional ethics is rapidly growing. This is particularly noticeable in relation to the social professions (social work, social care, social pedagogy, youth and community work), as books and articles in this field had been relatively sparse until recently. With a growing number of specialist textbooks and the introduction of two new journals (the online Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics in 2005 and Ethics and Social Welfare in 2007), the first decade of the twenty-first century is heralding some new developments in the field of ethics for the social professions.

“Professional ethics” as a discipline (an area of study) and as a practice (what professional practitioners say and do) is constructed through the academic and professional literature and the practices of organisations and workers. Learning and teaching in the field of professional ethics is heavily influenced by textbooks in the specialised subject areas (social work, nursing, medicine, for example) and documents published by professional bodies, particularly codes of ethics or conduct. In the English-language literature, “professional ethics” is often equated with codes, rule following, analysis of difficult cases.

1 For a brief overview of relevant literature, see Banks 2008.
and the development and use of ethical decision-making models. I will briefly summarise what I characterise as this traditional Anglo-American approach to professional ethics, outlining what I see as three main features.

1. **Codes of ethics** – There is a tendency to associate both the study and practice of “professional ethics” with ethical codes. Codes of ethics are written or implicit sets of norms that usually identify the core purpose of the profession and outline ethical principles and rules or standards of professional practice. They are generally written and controlled by professional or regulatory bodies and play a role in demarcating the profession, promoting professional identity, guiding and regulating practitioners and protecting service users (Banks 2003). These norms can be characterised as “externally generated” in that they originate from outside the individual professional practitioner. They comprise general principles and rules that apply impartially to anyone in the profession in question. In Britain, the USA and perhaps other countries too, the proliferation of codes of ethics, conduct, or practice, particularly exemplified by increasing concern with ethics in public life and ethics in the practice of research (the latter being monitored and enforced by research ethics committees/institutional review boards), has contributed to an image of “ethics” as being about conformity to rules and standards.

2. **Conduct** – Professional ethics tends to focus on the conduct, that is, actions, of anyone in the role of professional practitioner. There is a concern with deciding what ought to be done and judging whether the actions taken were right or wrong with reference to impartial general ethical principles. Codes of ethics tend to encourage this kind of thinking, as do many of the textbooks, which often make substantial use of action-focused cases for illustration or discussion.

3. **Cases** – The cases that feature in professional ethics textbooks often take a particular form. They are abstracted from time and place and give little indication of the character, emotions, or specific circumstances of the actors involved (Chambers 1997). This is particularly true of the typical short case used in teaching, where minimal contextual details are given of a situation or event and students are asked to discuss and decide what the protagonists in the situation should do, or what they, the students, would do in such a case (Banks and Williams 1999). Often these cases may be framed and referred to as “dilemmas” (choices between two equally unwelcome alternatives), and sometimes students are encouraged to use a decision-making model.

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3 See, for example, Banks 2006, Beckett & Maynard 2005, Congress 1999, Reamer 1990.
In this chapter I will focus attention on “professional ethics cases” and the decision-making models that are often recommended to assist students and practitioners in thinking through difficult cases.

**Professional ethics cases: Decision making**

I will take a case that was constructed by a colleague (Imam 1999) and used in the European Social Ethics Project (with which I am involved) in research and teaching about ethics with students (Banks and Nøhr 2003). The case, which is based on real experiences, was given the title “cultural conflict” when used in teaching with students.

**The cultural conflict case**

The worker in an Asian women’s project was approached by a member whose daughter, Asha, attended the young women’s group. The mother was concerned about her daughter’s behaviour as she had been seen in the community with her white boyfriend. This had provoked great censure within the community as she was seen to be too “westernised and moving out of her culture”. As a widowed single parent, the mother was quite distressed about her daughter’s behaviour and the implications it would have for her own honour and respect, as well as that of her other daughters, within the community. She asked the worker to use her influence to dissuade the young woman from seeing her white boyfriend. Asha had also discussed the issue with the worker and clearly stated that she felt she should have the right to make her own decision about her future partner and did not really care what her community thought of her. What should the worker do?

The case is framed as a choice for the worker – whether to support the mother or the daughter. It does not include much detail about any of the characters involved. The worker may be an Asian woman, but we are not sure. We do not know in what country the action takes place, what is meant by “Asian”, how well the worker knows the family, how old Asha is or what her boyfriend is like, apart from being “white”. All these questions are usually raised by students in discussion and a common way forward is often identified as involving the worker taking a mediating role between the mother and daughter. Cases like this are very useful in teaching.

However, the focus in professional ethics textbooks on difficult cases makes it seem as if “ethical” issues only arise when a problematic case or difficult dilemma is experienced. This is a point that Rossiter et al. (2000) made based on their research with Canadian social workers. They reported that practitioners regarded the more contextual and policy-related issues in their work (which were not framed as “cases”) as having to do with “politics” and therefore not part of their area of decision-making influence. This focus
on cases also leads to ignoring ethical dimensions of other aspects of practice, which are not about action and decision making – for example, motives, qualities of character, or moral perception as a precursor to invoking principles or making decisions. Since typical textbook ethics cases are often rather de-contextualised accounts of actions (no time, place, country), leading to a need to make a decision, inevitably analysis is drawn towards consideration of ethical decision making using principle-based approaches to ethics.

To help students to analyse cases like this, textbooks often offer ethical decision-making models. Loewenberg and Dolgoff (1996), for example, offer a hierarchy of ethical principles to aid decision making in social work. When there is a conflict of principles, priority is given to the principle that is highest in the list:

1. Protection of life
2. Equality and inequality
3. Autonomy and freedom
4. Least harm
5. Quality of life
6. Privacy and confidentiality
7. Truthfulness and full disclosure

In the case of Asha and her mother, we might conclude, on the basis of this hierarchy, that respecting Asha’s autonomy should come before considerations about her mother’s reputational harm or quality of life. Interestingly, in reviewing the hierarchy of principles, Harrington and Dolgoff (2008) report that they have found that social workers vary in how they rank the principles, suggesting that the idea of a fixed hierarchy does not operate in practice. Other approaches to ethical decision making include linear stepwise models that serve to guide the student or practitioner in systematically analysing and assessing the issues involved in a case and the possibilities for action. For example, Goovaerts (2003) offers a seven-stage plan:

1. What are the facts?
2. Whose interests are at stake?
3. What is the dilemma about?
4. What are the alternatives?
5. What is the conclusion?
6. How to carry out the decision?
7. Evaluation and reflection

There are numerous other models, including Gallagher’s ETHICS framework: Enquire about facts, Think through options, Hear views, Identify principles, Clarify meaning, Select action (Gallagher and Sykes 2008).
Rossiter et al. (2000) reported that they did not find social workers using ethical decision-making models in their practice. I think most of us would be very surprised if they had. This is not just because, in many cases, there is no time for the professional to consult a step-by-step model, but because (despite the rhetoric) these models are not designed to be used on a daily basis. They are mainly a way of encouraging students (often in a classroom or supervision setting) to reason and reflect systematically on ethical issues in practice, some aspects of which may then become intuitive or “second nature” as they practise social work. Nevertheless, while useful in this sense, these decision-making models are somewhat problematic in that they seem to imply that “ethical” issues can be separated from other aspects of practice (technical, political, legal and so on); some models suggest the use of a rather simplistic rational-deductive model of reasoning involving applying general ethical principles (perhaps from a code of ethics) to an ethical dilemma or problem in order to resolve it.

All of these criticisms can be, and indeed have been, countered. Professional ethics textbooks are becoming more sophisticated and complex as the years go by, with second, third and fourth editions adding greater coverage of virtue ethics, the ethics of care, and postmodern and discourse approaches. Similarly, new and improved ethical decision-making models are being developed. For example, McAuliffe and Chenoweth (2007) offer an “Inclusive Model of Ethical Decision-Making”, which is circular in form and takes into account many of the criticisms of the existing simplistic, sequential models. Their model rests on four key platforms (accountability, consultation, cultural sensitivity and critical reflection), which are constructed from “important foundational values and principles”, and “underlie the dynamic five-step process that uses a reflective yet pragmatic approach to identify and analyse all relevant aspects of an ethical dilemma.” This model adopts a more sophisticated and flexible approach to ethical decision making and encompasses aspects of sensitivity and critical reflection within it. In this sense it acknowledges the embedded and contextualised nature of practice. However, it is still located within the traditional model of professional ethics as concerned with resolving ethical difficulties logically and rationally through analysing all aspects of a situation in a relatively impartial fashion.

Ethics in professional life

In order to free ourselves of some of these associations with professional ethics, it might be helpful to make a conscious effort to shift from the concept of “professional ethics” as an area of study to thinking instead about “ethics in professional life”. The use of the phrase “in professional life” draws attention to the idea of “professional life” as a whole: it is lived by people; it has a past and a future; it may have a texture and a particular context. The suggestion is that “ethics” as an area of study can be found embedded in the life, and
ethics as values and norms are lived in and through the life. This does not mean abandoning professional ethics, but rather broadening the scope of focus from codes, conduct and cases to include commitment, character and context. It means including more relevant approaches from moral philosophy that stress the situated nature of ethics, such as virtue ethics, care ethics and moral phenomenology (including moral perception, imagination, empathy). Such approaches are beginning to be advocated for in the literature on ethics in social work, but often at a philosophical and theoretical level, rather than in terms of how this might influence teaching and learning. Another source of knowledge is empirical studies by social work academics and practitioners, which offer accounts from practitioners and service users about what they say, think, feel and do in practice. These empirical studies are often not linked to the literature on professional ethics, but can be very useful in offering narrative accounts and analyses of moral discourse and practice.

Three key elements of ethics in professional life are identified below:

1. **Commitment** – This involves paying attention to the internally generated value commitments of those who take on the roles of professional practitioners, that is, seeing them as having commitments to a range of values, including personal and political as well as professional and societal. It entails taking account of people’s motivations for doing the work, including the role of passion and “vocation” in people’s professional lives.

2. **Character** – Considering the importance of the character or moral qualities of professional practitioners leads to a focus on the person rather than on their actions or conduct. Important questions for consideration include: “How should I live?”, “What kind of person should I be?”, “How can I be caring, courageous or just as a professional practitioner?”

3. **Context** – This involves acknowledging that practitioners work in particular contexts where politics, policy and the profession and employing agency define what is relevant. It entails an holistic approach, situating the practitioner in webs of relationships and responsibilities, taking into account the importance of moral orientation, perception, imagination and emotion work.

**Ethics in context: Narratives of professional life**

As a contrast to the constructed ethics case, I will now offer an extract from an interview conducted with a female British social worker, called Nicola, based in a hospice (an institution providing hospital and day care services for people who are terminally ill). It is the only hospice in a medium-sized city. Nicola is an experienced white British social worker who has worked in a range of settings. She is currently working as a social worker with people who are patients in the hospice, and with terminally ill people and their families.
Nicola’s story

As I said to the Macmillan nurse one day as she and I were walking up a man’s path, I said: “That man’s looking through his window and he must think: ‘My life has come to this, here I am and there’s a social worker and a nurse coming up my path’. You can’t get much worse than that in life really because what it says, it says something about that man’s life. It says on every level he’s having to resort to this support and it’s a long way from a man who once thought he was independent, a person who was in control of his own life. One of them says: ‘You’re dying’ and the other one says: ‘You’re not coping socially’. And you know, if you look at it in terms of how he felt about that, that must have been such a deeply depressing thing for him to see coming up his path, this bevy of people who were saying: “You need lots of help here on every level”, and for somebody who’s not used to that, extraordinarily undermining. And I have to know that my presence is not always welcomed. I may think that I’m supporting people but what they see when a social worker turns up is something quite different [they think]: “I’ve failed”.

This is a different kind of story from the cultural conflict case discussed earlier. It is a reflective account given in the words of the social worker. It does not involve a decision or even an actual difficulty. It is simply a story of how Nicola goes about her everyday work, in which ethical dimensions are embedded. Nicola describes herself imagining what the man she is going to visit might be thinking, giving a story about herself as a person who is doing a lot of psychological work, preparing herself for her meeting with the man. She is morally orienting herself towards the encounter she will shortly have, drawing on her moral imagination, perception and sensitivity.
How can we analyse Nicola's story and what can we learn from it? If we reflect on this extract, we might suggest that Nicola is giving an account of herself to the interviewer as a “good social worker” (in moral philosophical terms, we might say a “virtuous social worker”). In particular, she presents herself as sensitive and aware that others may not see things as she does. The process of her giving the account to the interviewer could be regarded as a moral performance in itself. She is constructing herself as someone who is very self-aware and attentive to the views of others. In this case, she is empathic to the situations of people who are terminally ill.

Prompted by the face at the window, she gives an account of herself imagining what the man might be thinking. Interestingly, she herself does not use the word “might”; rather, she refers to what “he must think”, and she repeats “must” later when she says “that must have been such a deeply depressing thing for him…” She speaks in the voice of the man, voicing his imputed thoughts as: “My life has come to this, here I am and there’s a nurse and a social worker coming up my path”. Clearly at this point in her story she has not met the man. We can assume she has some information about him, and that someone has referred him to her and the nurse as potentially needing social work and nursing support. Then, as she is walking up the path, she sees his face. Yet she still does not know what kind of person he is or how he will respond to her. She has no personal relationship with him yet, but she's already imputing thoughts to him. It is as though she is preparing for the encounter, the time when he turns from what we might call a “case” into a person.

Nicola is doing a lot of work. She is working at her account for the interviewer, where she is presenting herself as a certain kind of person – a good social worker. This is not just a standard descriptive account of events. In her account of what she was doing at the time of walking up the path, she is working hard preparing herself for the encounter with the man. She is focused on the meeting with the man before she reaches his door. We ourselves might imagine a different kind of scenario of two professionals walking up a path, which might include them chatting about something unconnected with this man. But Nicola is already focused on the task at hand, and is focusing the nurse too. We could perhaps describe her as doing “ethics work” – akin to Arlie Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour developed in her study of the work of airline flight attendants – that is, she is working on orienting herself towards the viewpoint of the man she is about to meet. We might almost think she is working too hard – verging on stereotyping him as a terminally ill person who is likely to find a meeting with a nurse and social worker “deeply depressing” and “extraordinarily undermining”. Alternatively, in imagining scenarios where she is not welcome we might regard what she is doing as a kind of mental exercise to get her in the frame of mind where she is “other-directed”.

If we want to draw on insights from moral philosophy, we might look to some of the work on moral perception, imagination and empathy. Blum gives an
account of “moral perception” as a two-step process: 1) accurate recognition of the features of a situation, and 2) recognising features of an already characterised situation as morally significant (1994: 30–61). The morally relevant features of a situation can be described as “the features that carry importance for the weal and woe of human beings involved” (Vetlesen 1994: 6). This might include noticing someone’s discomfort, recognising his/her hopes, fears, resentments or pain, or seeing a threat or a danger inherent in a situation. As Blum (1994: 30) comments: “one of the most important moral differences between people is between those who miss and those who see various moral features of situations confronting them”. What Blum calls “moral perception” is not, he claims, a unified capacity; rather it covers a complex range of capacities (ibid.: 46). Some people may be better at perceiving certain morally distinct features of situations than others (for example, suffering, racism or dishonesty), including being more sensitive to the plight of certain groups than others (such as people who are terminally ill, black people or people with disabilities).

Blum gives three examples of situations involving moral perception: 1) Recognising the discomfort of a women standing on the subway, where what was required was a focussed attention outside of oneself (not being lazy or self-absorbed). Certainly this seems to apply in Nicola’s case. 2) A white (American) man coming to realise slowly that the fact that a taxi driver has picked him up instead of a black women and child who were first in the queue may be a case of racism (involving the man imagining the thoughts of the taxi driver, imputing motives to him). Again, Nicola is doing some work rather like this, imputing thoughts and feelings to a man she does not know – imagining him as a certain sort of person. And 3) a manager appreciating the impact of an employee’s disability on his life at work (where empathy may be required: a concern for this particular other person and how they may be experiencing their disability). Whether we regard what Nicola was doing as “empathy” depends on how we view empathy.

In his book The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration (2000), Goldie gives a useful account of empathy as a process by which a person centrally imagines the narrative (the thoughts, feelings and emotions) of another person (2000: 135). He suggests that there are three necessary conditions for empathy: 1) I am aware of the other as a centre of consciousness distinct from myself; 2) the other should be someone of whom I have a distinct characterisation; 3) I have a grasp of the narrative which I can imaginatively enact, with the other as narrator. Clearly Nicola does not have a characterisation of the man at the window – she does not know what he is like psychologically or details of his biography. Without characterisation, Goldie claims (ibid.: 198), there is no possibility of centrally imagining another. So we might say Nicola’s account related to the use of moral imagination, but not empathy. However, Goldie later discusses empathising with a fictional character, and gives an account of himself walking along a Roman road in Italy and imagining experiencing
what it would be like for a Roman soldier struggling up the hill in the heat. He suggests we could regard this as empathising with the narrator (that soldier) as a type, acknowledging that one knows nothing particular about him, which enables one to individuate him from others of the type. This would fit with Nicola’s imagining the experience of the man as that of a type of terminally ill person.

What Nicola describes herself doing is interesting in that it is not a simple case of empathic imagination in Goldie’s terms. It focuses on a particular person in his particular situation, but details of the person and the situation are not available. In her imagination, therefore, she has the man giving voice to the generalised feelings and thoughts of people who are terminally ill (based, perhaps, on her experience of working in the hospice).

What Nicola describes herself doing – imagining the man’s thoughts and feelings as she walks up his path – is on the one hand an interesting account of someone who is very much in the role of a social worker: being a self-conscious or reflexive social worker as she walks up the path, with some degree of sensitivity and empathy for people who are terminally ill (that is, being a “good social worker”). On the other hand, once we, as readers or listeners, reflect on her account a little more, we might pose some questions:

- Is Nicola working too hard, putting herself too much in the role of social worker too early? Is she prematurely engaging her imagination and seeing the man in a certain way, rather than leaving herself open to meeting him face-to-face?
- Is the look of the man (the other) causing her to become self-conscious as Sartre (1958: 252–302) describes in his concept of “le regard”? Or, to borrow from Levinas (1989: 82–6), is the face in the window beckoning her, demanding a response?

Nicola’s story would be equally as good as the cultural conflict case in providing opportunities for students to talk and think about ethics. In addition to discussing the questions posed above, it provides a fruitful way to engage with some of the literature in moral philosophy on existentialist and relational ethics and on the role of moral perception and imagination. Similar accounts given by students themselves of ordinary aspects of their working lives could also be used in learning and teaching.

Concluding comments: Implications for learning and teaching

Quite a lot has been written at a theoretical or speculative level about the potential of situated approaches to ethics (ethics of care, virtue ethics, existential and relational ethics) to contribute to understanding ethics in the context of the work of social professionals (Banks 2004, see also Clifford 2002, Gray...
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and Lovat 2007, Hugman 2005, Orme 2002, Thompson 2008). Less has been developed, however, to show how this would work in practice and how such approaches can be incorporated into teaching and learning about ethics. Further elaboration from a virtue ethics point of view can be found in Banks and Gallagher (2008); some points relevant to a situated ethics in professional life are listed below.

1. **Seeing ethics everywhere** – Rather than separating ethics as a discrete area of study and abstracting ethical issues from practice learning, we can see ethics as embedded in practice learning and across the curriculum.

2. **Working with contextualised living stories/accounts** – In addition to working with short cases framed as dilemmas or involving difficult decisions, students and practitioners can be encouraged to give longer, more personal narrative accounts of their everyday professional lives, including their feelings, imaginings, hopes and fears.

3. **Balancing logic (analysis) with passion (feelings, emotions, imagination)** – Whilst recognising the importance in professional work of being able to justify decisions, reason logically and argue coherently, it is equally important to develop the capacities of students and practitioners to be morally perceptive, sensitive and compassionate and to see this as part of ethics education.

4. **Use of role plays, simulation, literature, poetry, drama** – In education and training for the social professions the use of role play and other creative methods is well-established, especially in teaching communication skills. These approaches are equally valuable in learning and teaching about ethics. Nicola’s story could be used as a precursor, for example, to students being asked to role-play a first visit to someone recently diagnosed with a terminal illness.

5. **Focusing on developing the capacities of practitioners to do “ethics work”** – The idea of “ethics work” is a development of Hochschild’s (1983) concept of “emotion work”, which she introduced in relation to her study of flight attendants to encapsulate the work that goes into being caring, attentive and compassionate in situations where this would not be our natural response. We could characterise as “ethics work” the hospice social worker’s use of her imagination and moral sensitivity. This concept of “ethics work” involves emotion work, but has added dimensions of:

- moral perception or attentiveness to the salient moral features of situations;
- recognition of the political context of practice and the practitioner’s own professional power (reflexivity);
- the moral struggle to be a good practitioner – maintaining personal and professional integrity while carrying out the requirements of the agency role. This would include handling the moral distress that comes from seeing what ought to be done but not being able to do it. It involves developing the moral qualities of courage and professional wisdom.
These preliminary reflections on the concept of “ethics in professional life” are part of a developing trend in philosophy to broaden the study of ethics from rational, principle-based action to include virtues, relationships and emotions. The development of such approaches to ethics is particularly important for the social professions, as rational, managerialist trends push in the opposite direction.

Acknowledgements

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References


Chapter 8

Moral Dilemmas in a South African Blended Learning Ethics Course

Vivienne Bozalek

This chapter looks at the types of issues identified by students as moral dilemmas in a blended learning course on social work ethics at a South African university. Furthermore, the chapter focuses on the constructivist design of the ethics course developed to enhance students' critical abilities to reflect on real-life moral dilemmas. In terms of the structure of the chapter, first some information about the background context of the construction of this course will be provided. This incorporates a short description of the current South African social work higher education landscape and its impact on the construction of this course, as well as a brief description of the university context where the course was implemented. The course itself will then be discussed, as well as the alignment and cumulative structure of the course tasks. This section describes how the formative assessment tasks are structured to scaffold the students' learning so that they are enabled to complete the final summative assessment task. The next section focuses on the summative assessment task, in which students write about moral dilemmas experienced in their practical fieldwork placement from the previous year. The spectrum of the sorts of moral dilemmas students identified in their final summative task will be outlined, and two typical examples of ethical dilemmas identified by a pair of students/critical friends will be discussed in greater detail.

The South African Bachelor of Social Work Qualification

The Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) is a four-year professional qualification with which all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa are obliged to comply with if they wish to offer programmes where students will be eligible to practise as social workers at the end of their qualification1. The BSW is registered in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and is administered by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which is responsible for the standards and quality of courses which are registered in the NQF. The general purposes of the BSW qualification are to equip learners with the following (South African Qualifications Authority2003):

1 This system was implemented in 1997.
• Skills to challenge structural sources of poverty, inequality, oppression, discrimination and exclusion.
• Knowledge and understanding of human behaviour and social systems and the skills to intervene at the points where people interact with their environments in order to promote social well-being.
• The ability and competence to assist and empower individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities to enhance their social functioning and their problem-solving capacities.
• The ability to promote, restore, maintain and enhance the functioning of individuals, families, groups and communities by enabling them to accomplish tasks, prevent and alleviate distress and use resources effectively.
• An understanding of and the ability to demonstrate social work values and the principles of human rights and social justice while interacting with and assisting the range of human diversity.
• The understanding and ability to provide social work services towards protecting people who are vulnerable, at-risk and unable to protect themselves.
• Knowledge and understanding of both the South African and the global welfare context and the ability to implement the social development approach in social work services.
• Understanding of the major social needs, issues, policies and legislation in the South African social welfare context and the social worker's role and contribution.
• The skills to work effectively within teams, including social work teams, multi- and inter-disciplinary teams, as well as multi-sectoral teams.

The fifth purpose listed here (“An understanding of and the ability to demonstrate social work values and the principles of human rights and social justice while interacting with and assisting the range of human diversity”) is the purpose which the ethics course discussed in this chapter seeks to address.

The University of the Western Cape

The University of the Western Cape (hereafter referred to as UWC) is an Historically Black University (HBU) or an Historically Disadvantaged Institution (HDI). This reflects its history as an Apartheid-state creation, as it was specifically designed to be a university for those categorised as “the coloured population”² of South Africa. The Western Cape is also home to

² Under the apartheid state, the Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1955 categorised people differently by race. Every South African citizen had to be classified and registered as White, Coloured, Indian or African, and Africans had to be further classified into the ethnic groups to which they belonged. In this chapter I make use of these terms, as they are still referred to in post-apartheid South Africa to indicate discriminations, present and past. They are used however, with the proviso that they are socially constructed and politically imposed terms which have been used to socially mark people for a variety of purposes.
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the better academically resourced and respected Universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch. These are both Historically White Universities (HWUs) or Historically Advantaged Institutions (HAIs), reserved under Apartheid for White English- and Afrikaans-speaking students respectively. The Western Cape was specifically regarded by the Apartheid authorities as the place where those classified as coloured were supposed to reside, and this was enforced by the Coloured Labour Preference policy. Implemented in 1954, this policy allowed employment possibilities for those categorised as coloured, while excluding those categorised as African, who had to apply for permits to work in the Western Cape (Ramphele 1993).

Initially, UWC was referred to in a derogatory manner as a “bush college” by those who studied there, and was regarded as an inferior, Apartheid-style form of tertiary educational institution. There was much activism at UWC against what students regarded as the Apartheid education provided by government-appointed conservative lecturing staff. During the 1980s, however, UWC became a respected institution which attracted into its employ progressive anti-Apartheid academics. Under the rectorship of Professor Jakes Gerwel, it became known as the “intellectual home of the left”. At this stage, there was an affirmative action admissions policy which encouraged students from the “disadvantaged majority” to study at the University. This disadvantaged majority includes African-language speaking students from all over South Africa, particularly women from poor, rural backgrounds. This made the student population at that time different from that of the previous era, when the vast majority of students were coloured and from the Western Cape area. In 2008, the student population comprised 47% coloured, 38% African, 8% Asian/Indian and 4% white students. The figures for 2009 were: 48% coloured, 39% African, 7% Asian and 4% white students. According to a 2007 HSRC study (Breier 2007) which examined throughput of graduates in seven HEIs in South Africa, UWC had the highest proportion of graduates in the lowest socio-economic category (75%). By comparison, the average percentage of graduates from this socio-economic category for all seven institutions (the Universities of Witwatersrand, Stellenbosch, Fort Hare, Limpopo, Western Cape, Tshwane University of Technology and Cape Peninsular University of Technology) was 56%.

Course construction and alignment

The course on Advanced Social Work Ethics was developed in 2005 as part of the Social Work Department's new curriculum, which was specifically designed with the national minimum standards of the Bachelor of Social Work in mind. This meant that all courses had to incorporate learning activities which would assist learners/students in achieving competence in the exit level outcomes which they would need to practice as beginning level social
workers. This course was thus designed to give students opportunities to accumulate the ethics-related competences required by the BSW. The course was developed to give students the opportunity to understand the following:

- How their own values have an impact on ethical decisions.
- What ethical dilemmas are, and ways of solving ethical dilemmas.
- How local and international social work ethical guidelines have an impact on the practice of social work.
- How international human rights and the South African constitution have an impact on social work practice.
- The conceptual frameworks for social justice and the ethics of care.
- How perspectives of ethics of care and social justice can be critically applied to the field of Social Work practice.

Students were provided with a list of prescribed and recommended texts so that they could engage with concepts and theories and assess how these related to their own experiences and those of other learners in the fourth-year class. Thus an important part of the design of the course was firstly for students to be able to indicate their own understandings of values and ethics and communicate these to their classmates, and to interact with literature and engage with each other using both their own experiences and the course literature. This is consistent with a social constructivist approach to education. As a lecturer and course instructor, I informed the students that I would be there to assist with any ideas or readings that they felt required clarification. The course ran for six months in the first semester (first and second terms).

One class session per week was devoted to students’ input in the e-learning environment, where they engaged in the assessment exercises with their classmates; in the other class session, I made myself available as a resource and a consultant for any queries they may have in relation to the work. The intention was that I would respond to issues that required clarification and that I felt were a general concern in the module. There were also a number of face-to-face sessions in which class presentations of ethical dilemmas were conducted – these are reflected in the assessment exercises discussed below.

**Blended learning**

The course was designed with learning activities where students would interact with fellow learners and instructors in both face-to-face classroom situations and on an e-learning platform using tools such as the discussion forum, worksheet submissions, chat rooms, essay submissions, and e-mailing. This is what has become known as a “blended learning approach”.

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3 For a more detailed discussion on how blended learning can be used, see Bozalek 2007, Bozalek et al. 2008, Littlejohn and Pegler 2007, Palloff and Pratt 2007, Yusuf-Khalil et al. 2007.
The learning tasks required students to interact with each other in groups, individually and in pairs as critical friends. In some instances, students were also given the opportunity to interact with students from other universities and other professions. Critical friends were required to write a response to a task and send it to their critical friend, who would then respond in both a supportive and a critical way (Bozalek and Matthews 2009). The intention of creating tasks where students would act as critical friends to each other was that, as a critical friend, the student would be willing and in a position to both support and challenge attitudes and behaviours surrounding the ethical deliberations of his/her partner (Taylor 2000, see also Thomas 2004).

Using constructivist principles to inform course design

The assessment tasks in the module were designed in a cumulative way so that students would be prepared for the final summative task, which they do in pairs with their critical friend. The course was designed so that students had the opportunity to engage in multiple assessment tasks using different learning activities and configurations: work in pairs, group work and individual work. In these tasks, students get the opportunity to engage with their own values and examine how these affect their professional practice; they work with the frameworks of principle ethics and the ethics of care and social justice perspectives, and apply these to various scenarios.

All the tasks incorporated in the course were consciously developed using constructivist principles. Social constructivism places the learner, rather than the teacher, at the centre of the educational experience. Furthermore, this approach focuses on how the learner understands and builds upon learning in a particular socio-cultural context (Pritchard 2007). I developed the curriculum bearing in mind the constructivist idea that tasks should be designed with the purpose of facilitating the learner in constructing knowledge and co-constructing knowledge with peers. I also kept in mind the social constructivist ideas that critical reflection and inquiry-based learning should be emphasised and all learners' views should be valued (Lewis and Allen 2005). Constructivism places emphasis on incorporating and building upon students' prior knowledge. The first task (Assessment Exercise 1) was designed with this in mind: learners are asked to examine how their own background and prior experiences have made an impact on their values and their professional practice. Furthermore, each task was designed as a step in scaffolded learning to make possible the Vygotskian (Vygotsky 1962, 1978) notion of the “zone of proximal development”, whereby learners move from one level of knowledge to another with scaffolding or support provided by collaboration and interaction with others.

4 For an example, see Bozalek and Matthews 2009.
The tasks were designed to be as authentic as possible, relating to the students’ own and prior experiences and to the real world of social work. Authenticity is another aspect of learning which is valued in social constructivist pedagogical practice. According to Conrad and Donaldson (2004), authentic tasks should be collaborative and incorporate participants’ shared interests. This is why I allowed students to select their own critical friends (pairs of students who dialogued with each other). Students also worked in groups, where they could build up a community of practice (Wenger 1998, 2002) to address ethical issues. Social constructivism also places emphasis on metacognitive processes where the learners have the opportunity to reflect on what they are doing, how they are experiencing the curriculum process, and how they interact with others, including lecturers/facilitators, and to think about how they will apply this to real world contexts (Pritchard 2007). Learning journals were designed to illuminate the students’ metacognitive processes by enabling students to reflect, at various stages of the course, on what they were learning and how this was affecting them personally and their professional practice, thus enhancing their understanding and awareness of their own learning in the ethics course.

The final summative task

Once students have had the opportunity to engage with ethical dilemmas by discussing Mattison’s (2000) framework in relation to an ethical dilemma in their groups in a discussion forum, by presenting an ethical dilemma and how they would handle it to the entire class and receiving feedback; and by engaging with social justice and ethics-of-care frameworks in essays; they have gained some knowledge and experience to undertake the summative task with their critical friends. The final task requires students to write about an ethical dilemma from their practice placement from the previous year and to examine their own dilemma and that of their critical friend from a number of different perspectives (Figure 1).

Figure 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Exercise 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This exercise is your summative assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a Read the article by Mattison (2000). Write 250 words on an incident which occurred in your practical work last year where you were in a dilemma about what you should do. Write a discussion (250 words) of the incident in relation to Mattison’s (2000) questions on pp. 209–211, nos. 1–8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Share the above piece of writing with your critical friend by posting it to him/her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Read the piece of writing you have received from your critical friend and respond to your friend’s piece of writing in no more than 500 words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moral Dilemmas in a South African Blended Learning Ethics Course

Read the South African Council for Social Service Profession’s (SACSSP’s) new ethical code and the IASSW and IFSW’s ethical document and write 500 words on what professional obligations you think are relevant firstly to your incident and secondly to the incident your critical friend wrote about. Post this to your critical friend.

Write a response to your critical friend’s piece of writing on the task in (d) (the SACSSP’s code of ethics in relation to the incident described) where you indicate whether or not you agree with the professional obligations which your friend has identified in your own and in his/her incident. Give reasons why you agree or disagree.

Read literature on the ethic of care and write 500 words analyzing your critical incident in terms of the ethic of care. How did the action you took relate to an ethic of care and what could you have done to make it more in line with a response from an ethic of care. Post this to your critical friend.

Comment on the written piece which your critical friend has posted to you. Critique his/her application of the ethic of care. How do your ideas differ or concur with those of your critical friend?

Write 500 words assessing what you did or did not do in your critical incident. Write a) from a social justice perspective or b) human rights perspective. Here you can refer to the link to the South African Constitution and Kallen’s (2004) book. Post it to your critical friend.

Respond to your critical friend’s piece of writing indicating whether you agree or disagree with his/her analysis from a social justice or human rights perspective. List your reasons for your response in no more than 500 words.

Write 500 words on how you could combine an ethics-of-care and social justice perspective to solve the dilemma which was posed in your critical friend’s ethical dilemma in (a). Post this to your friend.

Send a response to your critical friend indicating whether or not you agree with him or her and state your reasons for agreement/disagreement.

This section will focus on the students’ responses to this task by providing information on the sorts of dilemmas which students identified during the 2006 to 2008 period (Table 1), and then by giving an illustrative example of how students worked in pairs as critical friends to comment on their own and each others’ work.

Table 1

Students’ depictions of moral dilemmas in the practical work encompassed the following themes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues addressed in ethical dilemmas</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth in trouble with the law/diversion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professionals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School social work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in Table 1, the most prominent theme in students’ interchanges with their critical friends about ethical dilemmas they had encountered in their practical work the previous year was HIV/AIDS issues. These reported dilemmas largely dealt with confidentiality issues of disclosure of HIV status. The second most common themes were sexual abuse and pregnancy and abortion. In the following section, I will discuss the interaction between two critical friends who examined two of the most common themes: HIV/AIDS disclosure and sexual abuse.

An example of an exchange between critical friends

I have chosen the ethical dilemmas of a pair of critical friends who gave written permission to use their assignments; to maintain confidentiality, their real names will not be used, and I will refer to them as Moira and Barry. The first ethical dilemma, which Moira wrote about, relates to a complex situation in which she found herself. The issue was whether or not to disclose HIV/AIDS in a situation of abuse:

Last year during my practical work I had a long-term client. He was fifteen months old. He was hospitalized three times due to malnutrition and neglect. The hospital wanted to release him and assigned me to investigate his home circumstances and the reason why his parents subjected
him continuously to this kind of maltreatment. Upon scrutinizing his file I noticed that a nurse from a local clinic indicated that the child had traces of being exposed to HIV/AIDS.

This was an alarming notification to me and I wondered where the HIV/AIDS originated from and whether the affected person was aware of the existence of the disease and was treated for this. I realized that the predicaments of this family were multidimensional and was excited to assist them to the best of my ability.

I made an appointment with both parents. Both of them came and saw me. I met with them and attempted to assess their situation comprehensively. After I met with both parties together I requested to see them individually so as to explore their state of affairs further as I detected some kind of communication barrier between them.

I saw the mother of the child first and listened attentively to her. I nonchalantly told her that I saw on the child's file that he was sick, not mentioning anything about HIV/AIDS, as I did not want to be controversial in my practice. I was very calm and non-judgemental. At first the mother tried to steer the conversation in another direction and I fully respected this.

Much later in our contact with one another after I established that there was extreme emotional, financial, sexual and physical abuse in the relationship, the mother told me that she wanted to tell me something but I had to give her my word that I would not share it with her boyfriend, who is the child's father or any other family member of hers. I encouraged her to share this “secret” with me.

She told me that she was HIV positive but was too scared to disclose as she feared further, more severe abuse from her boyfriend, homelessness as well as stigmatization and discrimination. She told me that she suspected that she obtained the disease from her boyfriend.

I asked the mother if she would ever disclose, if she were receiving treatment for the disease and whether she was using condoms when having sex with her boyfriend. She told me that she would disclose when she feels ready, that she is not receiving treatment and were not using any form of contraception or protection during sexual intercourse.

I provided her with some knowledge relating to HIV/AIDS, informing her that she was making matters worse by possible re-infection and non-treatment. I also asked her whether she wanted to conceive again possibly infecting an innocent baby. She told me that she never considered that fact and did however promise me that she will visit her local clinic to find out about treatment for herself as well as contraception.

By this time I estimated that the child could not return home since his parent's relationship was unsteady, as the boyfriend would occasionally chase the mother away, throwing all her clothes outside when he was drunk. I personally saw the clothes lying outside upon one home visit. The father would also at times refuse to provide money and food to the mother who was unemployed. They stayed in an informal settlement and
the mother would loiter around aimlessly during the day, while seeking shelter from neighbours at night until the boyfriend would accept her in again. I did not feel that the boy’s best interest would be met in such circumstances and the boy was placed in foster care while family reunification services started with the parents.

I had to implement these family reunification services and both of these parents became my clients. I was now in the dilemma of deciding whether I should tell the boyfriend of his girlfriend’s HIV/AIDS status or not, seeing that she was having sex with him without protection.

I decided not to tell the boyfriend but to preserve the confidentiality and self-determination of the girlfriend.

In making this decision I was definitely aware of my personal biases and preferences, which relates to honesty, monogamy and morality. I successfully attempted to keep this from impacting the outcome of the situation. I acknowledge that a person’s values can sometimes be in direct conflict with one’s professional values but realize that I chose this profession and therefore I am obliged to uphold its code of ethics, principles and values at all times.

My decision was also based directly on my legal obligation as I knew that I could be sued by this woman should I divulge protected information without any just cause, without her consent. In this situation I was therefore not willing to act outside of legal obligations even though I thought that doing so would serve both client’s best interest. For instance, if the boyfriend knew about his girlfriend’s HIV status then he could be tested and treated, if he too was HIV positive. The girlfriend would also be relieved from carrying this health burden alone and could accumulate some support when she disclosed, as a caring network which specializes in HIV/AIDS cases does exist in their area.

I also strictly adhered to the Agency policy when making my decision because I consulted with my supervisor, keeping the identity of my client anonymous. My supervisor instructed me to follow the social work code of ethics’ principles, which relates to confidentiality and privacy. She said that in my practice I should always uphold my integrity as a professional. I realize that agency policy may not take preference in all cases but in this situation, I as a social work student who was still in the learning process perceived my first obligation to be towards the Agency where I was placed to gain practical experience. My choice of action was thus strongly influenced by my role within the Agency.

In this situation the client’s right to self-determination was the overriding value to endorse. I could not force her to do something that she was not ready to do, as I perceive that to be oppressive practice, which is in direct contrast to the strengths based approach currently followed in the social work profession.

In making my decision I viewed strict adherence to procedural practices (adherence to laws and policies) as more important than evaluating possible cost and benefits to the client and client system for each of the various choices of action. I aspire to be a consistent Social worker who mostly
follows the deontological ethical perspective. This perspective states that “actions, in and of themselves, can be determined to be right or wrong, good or bad, regardless of the consequences they produce. Adherence to rules is essential and formulated ethical rules should hold under all circumstances” (Mattison 2000: 204).

I do have to add however that I am not planning to be a rigid Social worker. There will be times in my practice that I will review and substitute the deontological perspective with something more appropriate and relevant as I realize that each case is unique and should be judged according to merit.

The second student, Barry, who was Moira’s critical friend, identified the following dilemma. Note that the student writes in the third person, referring to himself as “the student social worker”:

The incident that the student social worker perceives as an ethical dilemma and will be reflecting upon occurred during his third year practicum placement at a children’s home for boys with behavioural problems and who have been confronted with the law. The long term client with whom the student social worker conducted micro (individual) intervention with had been sexually assaulted by one of the farm workers from a farm near the agency, whilst playing with his peers on the nearby farm. After the incident occurred the client informed the student social worker about the incident. The client and the student social worker then explored the incident, during which the student social worker informed the client about the legalities (his right and the agencies policies) around incidents of sexual assault.

In giving pre-eminence to the client’s facts and believing the client, upon deciding on a resolution or intervention to be taken, the client informed the student social worker that they should leave the matter closed and not inform anybody about the incident that occurred. He did not want his peers to find out, because he feared that they will insult him about it. He also mentioned that he do not want the social worker at the agency to find out either, because she would look at him knowing that someone has sexually assaulted him, which would make him feel embarrassed. Knowing his professional, legal and ethical obligations towards the incident that occurred the student social worker was confronted with the dilemma of whether he should tell anybody or not.

Having read Mattison (2000:209–211) the student social worker’s views around this particular incident have been challenged. His personal and professional values have influenced his decision, because he believes in the principle of confidentiality and the client’s right to self-determination and in this case the client had the ability to determine what steps to be taken. Secondly regardless of the legal obligation attached to the incident of sexual assault that occurred the student social worker had to give preference to the best interest of the client as it is stipulated in the South African Constitution. The student social worker acted outside his legal obligations in the attempt to meet the client’s best interest, which in this case was to not break confidentiality.
Adhering to the agency's policy somewhat played a role in terms of the ethical decision, because the agency also gives preference to what the client thinks is best in a given situation.

In the two ethical dilemmas described by the students/critical friends, both identify issues of whether to disclose or not – in the one case, disclosure of HIV/AIDS, and in the other, of sexual abuse. Furthermore, both students used Mattison's (2000) article, which they were required to incorporate, to explain and justify why they ultimately chose not to disclose the HIV status/sexual abuse of their client. In their responses to their critical friend's decision regarding his/her ethical dilemma, both students were highly critical of each other's decision not to disclose, but softened their judgement by initially praising the work that their critical friend had done with his/her client. The excerpt below shows how Moira skilfully acknowledges the complexity of the context and praises Barry for his handling of the situation, but then proceeds to critique his decision not to reveal the sexual abuse:

Barry, I am really intrigued by the critical incident that occurred to you in your practical placement last year. You were placed in a very difficult position. I am impressed at the level of trust that you built with your client so much so that the client told you about the alleged sexual assault that he was subjected to, something he did not want to share with anyone else. Well done! I respect you for the stance that you took at that time. Forgive me for having a different perspective on your incident. I do feel that confidentiality may not have been in the best interest of your client. I feel his human rights were violated. He is a minor and was taken advantage of, by an adult residing close to the Children's home. This was a criminal offence and for me sexual offence is morally wrong. I am also wondering how many other children were placed in a similar situation by the alleged perpetrator and chose to remain silent alerting no one. The alleged perpetrator may be a threat to other innocent victims. I therefore feel that it was necessary to expose him and alert others about the possible danger that lies in playing on his farm.

It was correct that you informed your client about his legal rights but according to me you should not have promised him confidentiality. I feel that your client should have been supported, empowered and encouraged (though not forced) to lay a charge against the alleged perpetrator rather than to accept the harm done to him passively. I understand that he was afraid of the stigmatization, ridicule and potential discrimination from his peers but this could have been conquered through assuring him of continuous assistance and through offering to create awareness around sexual abuse to his peers, perhaps in a group context. Such education could have entailed a definition of sexual assault, signs and symptoms in a victim and the seriousness of the offence. Emphasis could have been placed on the victim's innocence and blamelessness. This could have aided others to also disclose similar incidents, if there were any.

I somewhat agree with you in honouring your client's right to self-determination and preference in the intervention. I do on the other hand feel that the client's age, level of education, background and current circumstances...
should have been weighed more carefully in granting him this right fully. Allowing him to make his own choices and decisions could have been a risk to himself and others. I am just concerned about the alleged perpetrator continuing with the assault on him, seeing that he decided to accept it passively while at the same time fearing the risk the alleged perpetrator had to other children from this Children’s home. I feel that the client was very vulnerable, insecure and young and these variables along with others could have influenced his decisions to a great extend.

I therefore disagree with you on your professional obligation relating to confidentiality. In the first instance I do not think that this should have been promised to the client especially when taking into account the legalities involved in this case.

Another possible action that could have been followed was for the client to report the case in confidence to the police and for the student Social worker to recommend that the proceedings resulting from the case be as confidential as practicable.

Moira goes on to invoke the Bill of Rights to justify her critique of Barry’s chosen intervention regarding the ethical dilemma. Barry's initial response to Moira is also initially encouraging and becomes more critical, showing that he too has learned that one first needs to give positive feedback in order to establish some rapport with one’s critical friend before critiquing their intervention. The following is an excerpt of his response:

Upon responding and reflecting on the piece of writing submitted by you on the ethical dilemma you were confronted with, allow me to affirm and congratulate you for intervention conducted to the best of your ability. Having read your piece the understanding you possess around appropriate social work roles in a given situation became clear to me. Throughout your writing piece it became obvious to me that you were applying the theory that you were exposed to in 2005, during the module Child and Family Well Being. The social work skills implemented was of such a nature that it mobilised rapport between you and your respective client systems. The comprehensive analysis conducted by you created a platform for you to practice from a social work and strengths based perspective.

However I am of the opinion that the majority of your writing piece content was around background information and did not directly speak to the child who had traces of HIV and AIDS. In relation to the above it became clear to me that you might have difficulty distinguishing who your primary client is as a result of them demanding your undivided intervention. Nevertheless, the ethic of care and its elements as stated in Tronto (1993) is visible in your writing piece, because you mentioned about attentive listening to the child’s mother whilst speaking to her. You mentioned in your writing piece about you detecting communication barriers between the child’s parents that to me serves as an indication of your assumptions and stereotypes about the client system’s situation. Be careful of assuming as assumptions have the tendency to unconsciously become your intervention goal and in the process you forget about the client’s presented situation.
In terms of Tronto’s (1993) ethic of care, Moira uses the phases of care to indicate how she would have gone about intervening in the situation in terms of the moral values of attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness and their corresponding phases in the care process:

- **“Caring about”:** I would have cared about the safety and well being of his client in a holistic manner as well as the safety of the other residents within the Children’s home.
- **“Taking care of”:** I would have ensured that his client’s medical and psychological needs would have been taken care of.
- **“Care giving”:** I would have summoned qualified and specialized professionals such as a doctor or therapist to give adequate care even if no charge was laid. I would have prepared the client for this and would have asked his permission. The police could also have been involved at this stage, while the client’s confidentiality was still being promoted.
- **“Care receiving”:** I would have ensured that his client received appropriate care and that his best interest were met at all times and through all the means possible and available to him.

Barry shows his appreciation for this and other advice given to him by his critical friend in the following conclusion:

> Overall the suggestions made by my critical friend have been valuable and have contributed to my learning and will guide future interventions.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has given an overview of the design of a constructivist course on ethics at a South African university. In the course, students engage in online and face-to-face communication with each other to learn how to identify ethical dilemmas and respond to each other’s dilemmas from a number of different perspectives. The course provided students with opportunities to engage with each other to deliberate on the complexities of solving ethical dilemmas. The range of ethical dilemmas identified by students are typical issues which are of current concern in the South African situation, and the two ethical dilemmas presented in further detail in this chapter demonstrate the multidimensional nature of issues that clients are having to face in the current context.

It is my contention that by designing learning activities where students can both support and challenge each other’s actions and thoughts on how they had dealt with dilemmas, I gave them an opportunity to share openly with each other and use their prior knowledge of ethical dilemmas and perspectives on dealing with these dilemmas in ways which would be useful for reflecting on their practice. The intention of engaging in this exercise is for students to be able to examine ethical dilemmas in their practical fieldwork placement from ethics-of-care and social justice perspectives. They are required to revisit these perspectives to examine dilemmas that emerged, hopefully, the course will give them the ability to transfer these skills to their practice as beginning social workers.
Figures

**Figure 1**

**Assessment Exercise 1**

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<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Write a short paragraph (about 250 words) on your idea/image of a morally good person. Post it to your critical friend.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Respond to your critical friend's written piece on a morally good person. Write another paragraph on how you think your cultural/gender/class/ethnic background has had an impact on your own values. Post it to your critical friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Respond to your critical friend's paragraph on how his/her background has an impact on his/her values. Write a paragraph, giving one example of how your own values have had an impact in a problematic way on your practice as a social work student. Post it to your critical friend.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>Write a response to your critical friend, giving feedback on what you think your friend could do to deal with the issue he/she has raised. Post it to your critical friend. Write a 500-word paragraph about how you think your views on the unseen world or spiritual matters affect how you live your life and how you interact with people who may have different beliefs. Post it to your critical friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Write a response to your critical friend's paragraph about spiritual beliefs. Write another paragraph on how your spiritual beliefs have had an impact on your practice as a social work student. Post it to your critical friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Write a response to your critical friend on how his/her spiritual beliefs have had an impact on his/her practice as a social worker, comparing your own experience with his/hers.</td>
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**Figure 2**

**Assessment Exercise 2**

This is the first exercise that you will be doing in your group. You will need to do some background reading in order to understand and debate the issues.

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<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Read Zook's (2001) case study in <em>The New Social Worker Online</em>. Discuss online with your group members what you would do in this situation. Identify which ethical guidelines you would use to help you make this decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Read the article by Mattison (2000) on ethics and use her model on page 206 to indicate how you would analyse the ethical dilemma. Discuss this with your group members in the discussion forum of your work group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>After your discussions on this issue, come to a group consensus and post your final group response on the guidelines you would use and the model in (b) on the discussion forum for your instructor to read.</td>
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### Assessment Exercise 3

For this exercise you will need to read the Bill of Rights in the SA Constitution and the SACSSP and the IASSW ethical guidelines in order to answer the multiple-choice questionnaire (MCQ) in the Assessments section. All these documents are available online if you click the links provided to you on the KNG site under Contents or in the Course documents.

### Assessment Exercise 4

**Journal reflections.** You will be required to keep a journal and to post 2 journal entries during the course of the module and then a final journal entry at the end.

- What am I learning in this module and what am I struggling with?
- How can I implement what I have learned in my practical work as a social worker?
- How is what I am learning related to the other modules I am studying this year or have studied before?

### Assessment Exercise 5

**This exercise will be presented in class.**

Each group will be given an ethical dilemma to read. You will be given 20 minutes to read it and consider the following issues:

- The problem
- The ethical dilemma
- Values, conflicts and moral beliefs of the clients
- Your professional obligations in this situation
- Gather additional information. Who should be the main decision makers? What would they want?
- Identify all possible options open to the decision maker and all possible consequences of each option
- Make a decision in conjunction with and reflecting the decision maker’s best judgement
- Take action
- Assess the decision and its outcomes. Were the projected outcomes the same as or different from the actual outcomes?
- Was this a good decision for future precedent?

Your group will be given ten minutes to present all of the above. The question or situation that you are given must be read to the class.

Identify what theoretical position you used to make your decision.
## Assessment exercise 6

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<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>Compare the ethics of care with the notion of <em>ubuntu</em>. How do they differ and in what ways are they similar? Use a practical example in social work to show how you could assess a situation using the ethics of care and/or principles of <em>ubuntu</em>.</td>
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<td>b</td>
<td>Indicate how Martha Nussbaum’s list of human capabilities (which can be accessed at <a href="http://jbe.gold.ac.uk/11/eynd0301.html">http://jbe.gold.ac.uk/11/eynd0301.html</a>) is similar to or different from the human rights outlined in the SA constitution. Using each of the human capabilities in the list, evaluate whether the situation has changed for people in South Africa since 1994. Indicate what could be done to improve the situation for the majority of people in this country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Read Nancy Fraser’s chapter on recognition vs. redistribution. Write an essay about how this applies to the current South African situation. Think of South African examples where recognition is more important than redistribution and vice versa, and where both recognition and redistribution are important.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>The ethics of care and justice provide different perspectives on moral issues. Write an essay on which you think is the better ethical framework to use to make judgements in social work.</td>
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## Assessment Exercise 7

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<td></td>
<td>Get together with members of your group and choose one of the following questions and engage in a group discussion about your views on these issues which motivate why you think the way you do on the issues. You will need to do some reading yourself before you engage with the issues:</td>
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<td>Do you believe that resources should be distributed according to need, merit, future potential, first come first serve, lottery, or to the most disadvantaged?</td>
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<td>What is your view of a competent social worker? How would you know that a person has done a good job and made a good contribution as a social worker?</td>
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<td>Should a social worker always be truthful to his/her client? Indicate where your viewpoint falls in terms of deontological and utilitarian theories, and give reasons for your views.</td>
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<td>Do you believe that all people should be treated equally or that people should be treated differently depending on their circumstances?</td>
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<td>Do you believe that people have the free will to determine their own lives, or are their lives controlled by forces outside of themselves?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you believe that the individual’s rights and needs should take precedent over the good of the community as a whole? Why/Why not?</td>
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References
Moral Dilemmas in a South African Blended Learning Ethics Course


All people have the right to use their mother tongue wherever they are. This is a human rights issue, as forbidding them to do so is deemed a serious abuse of human rights.

Social workers are critical of linguistic discrimination in their own countries and of how indigenous people and people in colonies were and continue to be deprived of their mother tongues. The Charter of the United Nations specifies language as one of the core elements of discrimination, together with race, sex and religion.

However, like the United Nations, international social work organisations have deprived their own members of the right to use their own languages, discriminating against them in their very offices and meeting rooms. And they don't care. They simply aren't concerned about, or even aware of, this offence. What's going on?

The IASSW (International Association of Schools of Social Work) has designated Japanese as one of its official languages, along with English, French and Spanish. Other international organisations, including social work organisations, have not. Why? In fact, the IASSW's move leads one to wonder why Japanese was only recently made an "official language": Japan, after all, was the country with the largest number of member schools (approximately a quarter).

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1 This article is based on the author's oral presentation at the IASSW Congress in Durban, South Africa, on 22 July 2008. A Japanese version for Japanese social workers was published in Social Welfare (Japan Women's University Department of Social Welfare), 39, 31 March 2009. This text is an English version of that text, rewritten for an international audience.

2 To my knowledge, few studies examining this issue have been undertaken. This issue has, however, been the subject of studies focusing on social work organisations in individual countries. For an analysis of the situation in the UK, see Pugh and Williams 2006.

3 According to data from 2004.
This article is the author's personal exploratory interpretation of the reasons underlying the IASSW's decision to make Japanese one of its official languages. It does not maintain that the organisation (the IASSW) actually contrived and implemented this policy for these reasons; rather, it is meant to serve as a reference for its interpretation.

Although the designation of Japanese as an official language is dealt with in this article, the relevant issues apply to a number of languages. Chinese, Hindu, Portuguese, or German could have just as easily been used.

**IASSW's Concern with Language**

“...The IASSW has four official languages: English, French, Spanish, and Japanese. These are the languages used by the majority number of IASSW member schools” (IASSW 2006).

As noted above, at one point, Japan had the largest number of member schools, representing nearly a quarter of the total membership. According to data from the end of January 2006, Japan has since relinquished this position to the United States. Nonetheless, with seventy-seven schools, it still represents a fifth of the total member schools. In either case, Japanese was the second most spoken language after English; member schools that had French or Spanish as their linguistic medium were far fewer in number.

Since its very beginnings, the IASSW (ICSSW) has been conscious of the language issue. Kniephoff-Knebel and Seibel have noted that “the organizers and conveners of the international meetings during this first decade were fully aware of the need to use different languages to allow effective communication” (Kniephoff-Knebel and Seibel 2008: 806). They also quote a constitution for the International Conference on Social Work in 1929: “Every member is entitled to speak in whatever language he chooses. Abridged translations will be made whenever possible, in as many languages as appear necessary” (ibid.: 792).

Although the term “language(s)” naturally means Western language(s), the forerunner of the IASSW does seem to have made sure that its leaders were sensitive to “language(s)”. During the presidency of Lena Dominelli, the IASSW seemed to expand its interest beyond Western languages (Dominelli 2004: 523).

The IASSW has a Language Committee as a standing committee, and has been concerned with and tackling problems of language for many years. The

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4 The number of members fluctuates greatly because the IASSW only counts those schools which have paid dues at the time of the count. Thus the share of Japanese member schools in the IASSW fluctuates from a quarter to a sixth. Taking account of schools which are late with their dues, it would be appropriate to presume that Japanese schools constitute about a sixth of the total member schools.
IASSW believes that language is central to real participation by and equality among member schools, as well as for the organisation itself. The great efforts of Gurid Aga Askeland, the former chair of the Committee, recently led to the adoption of an IASSW Language Policy⁵, the introduction of which reads as follows:

The IASSW is a member organisation which is open to all social work educational programmes from all over the world. Therefore [it]…refrain[s] from becoming an elite organisation dominated by member institutions from the Western world…The IASSW recognises that there is and should be no difference in value and importance among any languages and all languages on this earth should be treated equally… (IASSW 2006)

The policy implements detailed rules for publications, websites and the organisation’s biannual Congress.⁶

**Why is the IASSW sensitive to the language issue?**

Why, then, is the IASSW sensitive to the language issue? Why must it be concerned with it? Because the language issue is a human rights issue and the essence of social work and an integral part of the work of the IASSW is devoted to social work education and to the protection and promotion of human rights. Furthermore, the language issue is a matter of democracy and the basis of the future society of human beings which social work envisages.⁷

Language shows what you are. The significance of language has been the subject of an enormous body of professional and other literature and countless discussions. “People cannot change their mother tongues easily. And language is deeply concerned with employment, entrance to schools or mental health to live with confidence as a human being. The official recognition of a language cannot be thought of without the viewpoint of human rights” (Tanaka 2000: 45). Language is a central source of discrimination. The Charter of the United Nations (1945) mentions language, along with race, sex, and re-

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⁵ Adopted at the Washington, D.C. board meeting (13 July 2005) and revised at the Toronto board meeting (11 July 2007).

⁶ 1) All important publications are to be translated “into the four official languages"; 2) the website is written “in four languages" and “headings of promotion material [in] as many languages as possible”; 3) at congresses, “plenary sessions should be translated into at least four languages including the official languages adopted in the preceding sentence,” “they have to be decided in accordance with the estimated number of participants using a specific language,” and “some paper sessions should be bilingual with translations” (IASSW 2006).

⁷ There have been objections to positing democracy as a guiding principle, but they will not be discussed here.
ligion, in its very beginning, in Article 1, Chapter I: Purposes and Principles. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and International Covenants on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and on Civil and Political Rights (1966) contain similar clauses in their second Articles, although they add “colour…political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” to race, sex, language and religion.

The UN Charter refers to language in other articles too, and there are a number of other documents, proposals, and resolutions on linguistic human rights within and outside the United Nations apparatus.

Article 21.1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) prohibits any discrimination by language; Article 22 stipulates respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. In 1996, NGOs, the Pen Center and linguistic law specialists from 90 countries adopted a Universal Declara-

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8. “3) To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”

9. “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 2).


tion of Linguistic Rights in Barcelona (Gotō 1999, see also Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights n.d.).

Discrimination by language receives far less attention than discrimination by race, gender etc., both in societies in general and in social work communities. At the same time, there exists a considerable body of studies and research on linguistics, psychology, anthropology, sociology, political science, philosophy, etc. (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1995, see also Eriksen, 1992, Ng 2007, Patrick 2005, UN 2001, Kimura 2006, Gon 2004, Tsukahara 2006, Shiomı 1990, Watabe 2004). This body of work covers a wide range of subjects: minorities within a country, indigenous people, colonies, disabilities, dialects, democracy, social justice, future societies etc. Especially for the United States, there are many references for general readers and/or for those with an orientation towards social action (Garza 2000, see also Sklarewitz 1992, Carison et al. 1988, Lang 1986, Hartman 2003, Cabot 1997).

Social work is a profession that protects and promotes human rights. The IASSW mission statement declares that “the IASSW adheres to all United Nations Declarations and Conventions on human rights, recognising that respect for the inalienable rights of the individual is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace” (IASSW n.d.). And the history of the IASSW does in fact reveal its involvement in efforts to promote human rights.

Participation and deliberation are indispensable elements of democracy. Without them, democracy cannot be realised. Kymlicka quotes John Stuart Mill’s argument: “Genuine democracy is ‘next to impossible’ in multilingual states, because if a people ‘read and speak different languages, the united public opinion necessary to the workings of representative institutions cannot exist’” (Kymlicka 2001: 212–214), and emphasises the importance of common languages in democratic deliberation 13:

Shared political deliberation is only feasible if participants understand and trust one another, and ... such mutual understanding and trust requires some underlying commonalities ... Deliberative democracy does not require a common religion (or common lifestyles more generally); a common political ideology (e.g. right vs. left); or a common racial or ethnic descent ... “National” linguistic/territorial political communities ... are primary forums for democratic participation (ibid.: 213).

He reaches the conclusion that “democratic politics is politics in the vernacular” (ibid.). “Political debates [carried out in languages other than mother tongues (Inada 2007: 205)] in multination states are almost invariably elite-dominated” 12.

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12 For text cited here, see Mill 1972: 392.
13 See, for example, Inada 2007: 203.
14 The term “Nations” is used to describe “self-governing language groups” (Kymlicka 2001: 213).
Thus, there is “no meaningful forum for democratic deliberation and collective will-formation above the level of the nation state,” and “the only forum in which genuine democracy occurs is within national boundaries” (ibid.: 235).

An understanding of international social work in today’s world places our present position in human history at a point between two poles: that of the nation state and that of the “world citizen”, “one world”, or “cosmopolis” (Akimoto 2005: 4). The guarantee of democracy, and with it participation and deliberation, is generally demanded as a necessary condition for the latter. People can communicate with one another as equals only through participation and discussion: “Human rights of the equality of opportunity as a world citizen must be respected in a cosmopolis” (Sasage 2004: 14–15).

Understanding points (1) to (3), the IASSW has reached the following level of sensitivity. The preamble of its Language Policy reads:

> Even if the majority of the members of the IASSW today are able to some degree to communicate in English...the IASSW realizes that there is a difference in people’s competence to read, listen to, and understand English to speak and present papers and take part in discussions at Board meetings and congresses. To make sure a real exchange is taking place and that people from various cultures and language groups have fair opportunities, we need to organise our congresses and meetings in ways so that not the same people are always in an inferior position (IASSW 2006).

So why didn’t the IASSW have Japanese as an “official language” before?

Ultimately, the question is not: Why did the IASSW add Japanese to its “official languages”? but: Why didn’t the IASSW have Japanese as an “official language” before?

As noted above, Japan had the largest number of membership schools and shared nearly a quarter of the total IASSW membership. Japanese was the second majority language, next to English. Member schools that had French or Spanish as mother tongues were far fewer in number. Nevertheless, French and Spanish have long been “official languages”. All IASSW members took the situation for granted, without raising questions.

More surprisingly, the IASSW board started discussions to add Russian, Chinese, and Arabic as official languages at its 2002 Montpellier meeting (Dominelli 2004: 523) and 2004 Adelaide meeting. The IASSW is a sister

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15 There is a diverse multitude of understandings and discussions on the notions of world citizen, cosmopolis, cosmopolitanism, etc. in various disciplines, but they will not be discussed here.

16 “At the Montpellier Congress Board meeting IASSW took the decision to increase its translation capacity to cover the now six official languages of the UN – adding Arabic, Chinese and Russian to the existing three” (Dominelli 2004: 523).
organisation of the United Nations, and holds United Nations NGO status. So the next step should be adding the remaining official languages of the UN. How many members were there whose mother tongues were Arabic, Chinese, or Russian? Zero, a few, and several, respectively. Isn’t there something strange about this situation?

Was it because Japanese was the language of a country that did not belong to United Nations (whose name was the same as the present United Nations) during the Second World War, that is, of an enemy country? Was it because it was not a Western language? Or was it simply because it was a language of the Far East, at the edge of the world map? Were these the – albeit unconscious – perceptions among the IASSW leaders? Or was this situation a conscious practical compromise, carried out with the reality of organisational operations (limited financial and human resources) in mind? In either case, was it not an apparent act of discrimination against a language, Japanese? Can the limitation of resources be used as an excuse to justify the abuse of human rights?

The only justifiable reason might be that, while Japanese has a large number of speakers, it is spoken only within the country of Japan, and therefore cannot be considered an international language. While a parallel argument was often heard regarding the adoption of official languages within the United Nations, it did not come up during the process of adopting Japanese as one of the IASSW’s “official languages”, at least not on the surface.

Language is a core element of discrimination, and to rob people of their mother tongues constitutes a violation of the natural order and human rights. Social workers have been busy decrying the past history and present reality of discrimination against the mother tongues of indigenous people, people in colonies, and minority members. At the same time, their international organisation has deprived the people sitting next to them at its meetings of their mother tongues. And they seem to be pretty cool, even insensitive, about it (cf. Piron 1998). Are we social workers not hypocrites? We make a big deal about things that happen outside our own organisations, but keep quiet about and are indifferent to things that are going on right under our noses. One is reminded of the “clean hand principle.”

Being aware of all this, the IASSW probably could not help adding Japanese to its “official languages”, regardless of other international organisations’ interests and choices.

The problem is not solved – official language is the problem

So Japanese is now an “official language”. Has the problem been solved? No. The real problem has not been solved at all. Adding Japanese to a list of

17 Some 50 Chinese universities have since joined the association.
“official languages” only means shifting Japanese from the position of being discriminated against by others to that of discriminating against others. It puts an end to discrimination at the hands of English, French, and Spanish by letting Japanese join them in discriminating against other languages.

Such is the essence of official languages. Katsuhiko Tanaka writes:

> In modern states, when they become aware that more than one language has been spoken, states sometimes approve that those languages have been spoken, and then guarantee that those languages could be used for various reports and procedures in governmental offices. These matters are set by laws and written sometimes in clauses of constitutions (Tanaka 2000: 40).

The designation of a language as an official language\(^\text{18}\) connotes a positive meaning in the sense that 1) it approves the coexistence of more than one language, and 2) guarantees speakers of those languages the right to use them at public offices. Even if “various languages have actually been spoken, unless there is awareness that they are ‘languages’” (ibid.), the problem of official language won’t arise. France prior to 1992 is a typical example.\(^\text{19}\) And the guarantee of the right obligates “naturally public offices to be equipped with the capacity to satisfy such a demand”\(^\text{20}\) (ibid.: 44).

However, an official language essentially means the logic and the arrogance of the majority, power holders and rulers. A key contribution of modern linguistics has been the realisation that “all languages are equal and even, regardless of being predominant great languages or inferior small languages” (ibid.). The IASSW Language Policy described above reads: “IASSW recognises that there is and should be no difference in value and importance among

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\(^\text{18}\) National language is also a language which is “not natural existent but approved”, but “official language is far practical and functional concept in comparison with national language, and makes a sharp contrast with the symbolic and sentimental concept which national language is tinged with.” “It was Austria-Hungary Empire and Swiss Federation that had the need to designate official language, and accumulated deep discussions over the concept of this word, and they became models for other countries which premised the existence of more than a language” (Tanaka 2000: 41). For example, the Swiss Federation designates Germany, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romance as ‘national languages’ in its constitution, but only the former three as official languages. There are no national languages (that is, organisational languages) in international organisations, only official languages (ibid.).

\(^\text{19}\) “In France where only French existed, theoretically, it was not necessary to proclaim that French is the ‘national language’– it was in 1992, far later, that the Constitution stipulated for the first time – thus, it was no need to bother to decide by a law which language is official language” (Tanaka 2000: 41).

\(^\text{20}\) For example, in Finland, where Finnish and Swedish are designated as “official languages”, post office employees are required to have the capacity to serve in these two languages, and in Puriyato Republic, Russia Federation, the President is required to know the two state languages, that is, Puriyato and Russian (Tanaka 2000: 44–45). Such a requirement, on the other hand, may possibly entail discrimination by class or social stratum.
any languages and all languages on this earth should be treated equally, regardless of the number of their users …” (IASSW 2006).

A proposal was neglected to “put translators to all languages of participants in the preparative stage of 2003 APASWE Asian & Pacific Association for Social work Education Congress”\(^\text{21}\). In contrast, the European Union has succeeded in “making official languages of all member countries official languages of EU organizations” since the adoption of Regulation No. 1 by the Council of Ministers (the predecessor of the Council of the European Union) in 1957.\(^\text{22}\) The official languages of 27 countries are treated equally,\(^\text{23}\) and official documents of the EU are translated into these languages. The Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe (2004) guarantees citizens of the European Union “the right to communicate in any languages which this constitution uses and to receive the response in the same languages.” “Languages and its use make a core of the EU [sic]” (EU n.d.).\(^\text{24}\) Of course, language problems exist in each individual country, but these are beyond the scope of this paper.

In this sense, the United Nations cannot avoid criticism of its language imperialism and hegemonism. The UN’s six official languages (Arabic,\(^\text{25}\) Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish) do not necessarily reflect today’s distribution of all human beings by mother tongue\(^\text{26}\). Speakers of

\(^\text{21}\) The proposal was made by the present author. The Congress was to be held in Nagasaki, but was cancelled because of SARS.

\(^\text{22}\) Treaties of Rome to establish EEC (European Economic Community) and EAEC (European Atomic Energy Committee), signed in 1957, effective as of 1 January 1958.

\(^\text{23}\) There are some rule-out clauses regarding a few languages. At present, 23 languages have been designated official languages.

\(^\text{24}\) The EU has a goal that citizens learn two languages besides their own mother tongues. (According to recent statistics, 26 percent have achieved “Mother tongue + two”.) September 26 has been designated as European Language Day (EU n.d.).

\(^\text{25}\) Regarding the process of its adoption, see UN 1954, UN 1973 etc.

\(^\text{26}\) The top 20 languages (mother tongue, first language) in the early 1990s in million (Crystal 2007):

1. Mandarin Chinese \hspace{1cm} 885
2. English \hspace{1cm} 400
3. Spanish \hspace{1cm} 332
4. Hindi \hspace{1cm} 180 (with Urdu, 236)
5. Arabic \hspace{1cm} 200
6. Portuguese \hspace{1cm} 175
7. Bengali \hspace{1cm} 168
8. Russian \hspace{1cm} 170
9. Japanese \hspace{1cm} 125
10. German \hspace{1cm} 100
16. French \hspace{1cm} 72
Hindu exceed those of Arabic and Russian, both official languages. Speakers of Portuguese, and possibly Bengali, exceed those of Russian. French, an official language and a working language (see below), is the 16th most spoken language, with 72 million speakers. The discussion on Conference languages is epitomised in a meeting of the heads of delegations to organise the conference at the United Nations conference in San Francisco (Veterans Building, Room 223, 26 April 1945). A French delegate insisted that French was "an international language ... the traditional language of diplomacy and one of the great languages of civilization," and a Chilean delegate supported him, saying that French should be "considered as [an] official" language because "it was traditional" to do so and that "the heroic France...made such immense sacrifices...against the totalitarian regimes" (UN 1945: 51, 77). Today, in the United Nations, speeches, remarks and most documents are translated into all six official languages, but not into other languages. "In some occasions, people can speak in non-official languages," but "in these occasions, the delegates who make the speech must provide the interpreter into one of official languages or the translation of the speech" (ibid.: 116, 138–139, 1777; UN 1948–1949: 129). The daily work in the secretariat takes place in either English or French, the UN's two working languages, and the secretariat staff are required to be proficient in both or either of these two languages (UNIC n.d.). The United Nations addresses and takes action against discrimination that happens

27 Including people who use it as a second language, the number increases, but is still less than the number of people who speak Hindu, Portuguese, and Bengali according to a statistical source.

28 An excerpt from the provisional proceedings:
"M. Bidault (France) requested that the remarks of the presiding officer be translated into French. It was moved by M. Bidault that both English and French be used on a basis of complete equality at all Conference sessions and meetings of missions, committees, and subcommittees.
He emphasized that this is a matter of principle for the French delegation and that it was essential not to give support to efforts which have been made to eliminate as an international language, French, the traditional language of diplomacy, and one of the great languages of civilization, by any action taken at this Conference." (UN 1945: 51)
"He [Sr. Fernandez (Chile)] said that it was traditional that at all international conferences the French language be considered as official. In this case, he stated that they should likewise make it so as a tribute to the heroic France that has made such immense sacrifices in order to defend liberty and democracy against the totalitarian regimes" (ibid.: 77).

29 Regarding the designation of other languages as working languages, see UN 1948–49: 43–47, UN 1973 etc.
on the outside, but apparently does not care about blatant discrimination within its own organisation (Piron 1998).

The only ultimate solution to the problem of official languages, from the standpoint of equality, would be to exclude the languages of nation states from being official languages and to adopt a common artificial world language. There is no other way (Sasage 2004: 15). But the only artificial language that is repeatedly referred to is Esperanto (Kadoya 2006: 125–129), which is closest to European languages in terms of content. Another proposal states that it would be "enough if we decide that nobody has the right to use their own mother tongue" (Piron 1998).

The significance of the IASSW’s decision to make Japanese an official language

At least three points should be noted:

One is the replacement of a normative scale, such as Western/non-Western or United Nations/non-United Nations, with a numerical scale (the number of members) in the IASSW’s designation of “official languages”. It certainly made the situation fairer and less discriminatory. Although it was a compromise with a reality, one could detect an improvement in the degree of fairness and discrimination.

The second is that this move was a successful attempt to placate and comfort Japanese member schools, which were previously unsatisfied with the IASSW’s operations and services, and to keep them within the association. They were, after all, the largest source of income within the IASSW. This action may have satisfied their “national interest” or nationalistic feelings, and worked as an incentive to raise the level of their participation and involvement. While this may be the primary reason from a sociological and political-dynamics perspective, such an interpretation is not interesting in the context of this article.

The third point could be the education of members and societies in general. By including non-European/American languages, speakers of Western languages, and especially English speakers, are constantly exposed to an environment which they cannot understand; they therefore get a taste of the

30 Regarding making Japanese an official language at the United Nations and in general, pros and cons have been cited even within Japan, including within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Advisory Council of Japanese (Kokugo Shingikai) (Sato 2000: 52–53). Objections come from two general directions. Firstly, accepting Japanese as an official language comes with considerable responsibilities, obligations and burdens. Secondly, there are many people who can maintain a superior position in academic, governmental, business communities etc. simply because Japanese is not an official language. If Japanese becomes an official language, their present position – which has been maintained because of their language capacity – would be downgraded.
feelings of bewilderment, unease, unpleasantness and inferiority frequently experienced by minorities. People's innocent insensitivity and arrogance were counteracted by making all members and the organisation as a whole constantly aware of the language issue as a result of the process of making Japanese an "official language". Beyond the boundaries of the IASSW, this move sent a message concerning the language issue, discrimination, and human rights to other social work organisations and societies in general.

The process of designating Japanese as an "official language" led the IASSW to a slightly higher level of understanding of official language. Although the IASSW had used the term "official language" in its discussions and even in its Language Policy, the way that this term was used indicates an understanding that seems closer to "commonly used language" than "official language". As a matter of fact, there was once a proposal to avoid the use of the term "official languages" and to endorse the term "commonly used languages". This reflects an awareness of how the term "official language" reflects a dominant, arrogant and discriminatory mindset, as described above. Careful readers will have already noticed that "official language" has been set in quotations in this article wherever it is used in reference to the IASSW. Although it has admitted that "English is the dominant [language] due to both lack of financial and human resources", the IASSW has avoided the arrogance of designating it as the organisation's working language, as the United Nations did, opting instead for the modest factual description of English as the "dominant" language (IASSW 2006).

Conclusion

So why did the IASSW designate Japanese as an "official language"? Answers usually cite the number of member schools. They should, however, state that it is because the language issue entails the problem of human rights, and human rights is a central concern to social work. Then there's the question of why the IASSW did not have Japanese as an "official language" until recently. The IASSW designated Japanese an "official language". Was this move intended to slightly curtail unreasonableness and unfairness, in the sense that it replaced a normative scale such as Western languages/non-Western languages with a neutral, numerical scale? Was it in order to hold on to its Japanese members, the largest sub-group in terms of membership, to secure financial resources by satisfying their nationalistic concerns? Or was it meant to further the awareness of human rights and language issues among its members,

31 When an IASSW board meeting in Adelaide, Australia, discussed whether to designate Japanese as an "official language", the present writer was for the idea, but against the use of the term "official language".
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particularly those whose mother tongues are Western languages, especially English, and, beyond the IASSW, to set an example for other international organisations and societies in general?

Once we understand the language issue as a human rights issue, “practicality” or “convenience” can no longer be accepted as an excuse for human rights abuses and discrimination. Can we use “practicality” as an excuse for tolerating racial discrimination and gender discrimination? The permissible range in which practicality may be used as an excuse depends on the lack/depth of the understanding of human rights and the intensity of the stab felt in the speaker's heart when he/she utters the word “practicality”.

“Accommodating” people with disabilities imposes a heavy “burden” on societies. Human society has, however, been overcoming this.

References


United Nations (UN) (1945), Documents of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, San Francisco, 1945. Volume 5 [Meeting of the heads of delegations to organize the conference (Doc. 29(English) DC/4, April 26, 1945, p.2 [p.51], Corrigenda Doc. 29(English) DC/4(1), May 12, 1945, p.1[pp.77]); Meeting of the heads of delegations to organize the conference (Doc. 32(English) DC/7, April 27, 1945, pp.1–2 [pp.116–117])("Report" by the Rapporteur, His Excellency, Dr. Guillermo Belt Ramirez, Chairman of the Delegation of Cuba, to the Plenary session of the Conference, April 27, 1945); Meeting of the chairmen of delegates (Doc. 36(English) DC/9, April 30, 1945, pp.1–2[pp.138–139]) (Secretariat-submitted Section V of the memorandum on “Rules of Procedures”, revised to take account of the changes agreed to by the Chairmen of Delegations at their First and Second Meetings), and Summary of Meeting of Steering Committee, (Doc. 50(English) ST/2, May 1, 1945, pp.4–5[pp.176–177])]. London and New York: United Nations Information Organizations.


Chapter 10

Ethics in/after social work research

Deliberations on the meaning of knowledge dissemination in social work research

Ana M. Sobočan

Introduction

Discussions of ethics1 and research concern the application of ethical principles in research.2 Ethical principles in research are based on the values of autonomy, beneficence and justice; they address issues such as informed consent, non-deception, the absence of psychological or physical harm, privacy, confidentiality, and a commitment to collecting and presenting reliable and valid empirical materials3.

A quick overview of or search for relevant literature reveals that the most frequently recurring debates on research ethics focus on regulatory mechanisms regarding research4, research processes involving humans (and animals) and values in research. Values are the focus of ethical reflection in research because they permeate numerous aspects of the research process: the aims of research, who conducts the research, who participates in the research, what kind of information is being gathered in the research and for whom or towards what ends etc. Ethical considerations include issues pertaining to how research is designed and

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1 The term "ethics" is describes or refers to norms, standards and rules of conduct for ethical practice. The practice in question is the practice of research in social work. However, the ethical considerations discussed in this paper are not limited to research conducted by social work researchers or to social work topics.

2 Research ethics as a concept are most developed in medical research. A key document in this field is the Declaration of Helsinki (1964, followed by six revisions, the most recent being 2008), and an earlier agreement, the Nuremberg Code (1947). The fundamental principles are the respect for the individual, their right to self-determination and the right to make informed decisions regarding participation in research. (The 2008 document is available at: http://www.wma.net/e/policy/pdf/17c.pdf).

3 On ethical principles, see, for example, Banks 1995, Peled and Leichtentritt 2002, Gray 2008.

4 Institutional review boards (established in the U.S. after 1974), which are known by other names elsewhere (i.e. ethical review committees), were first introduced in the field of medical research. Today, they are a subject of controversy in regard to social research and qualitative methods – there is a debate about the conflict between their regulatory role and exclusionist power on the one hand and academic freedom and innovativeness, as well as unpredictability, on the other (Lincoln and Canella 2009: 273).
conducted and the responsibilities and ethical standards that researchers should follow. The research design can, for example, encompass ethical questions pertaining to issues about the choice of topic, research question, methodology and methods. These are strongly tied to questions about confidentiality, risk assessment, reciprocity, informed consent, data access and ownership and other issues pertaining to research implementation. These questions are particularly evident when researching vulnerable groups or sensitive topics.

This paper will focus on ethical considerations and reflections regarding research "post-production". It will pose the question: What issues – in terms of knowledge dissemination and use – are of interest to the researchers after the research and writing up of the research are completed?

Do researchers (in social work) have a "responsibility" to use their research findings and position as researchers to aid in solving practical problems and bettering life situations? The question of whether the researchers should go beyond writing up results and publishing and communicating them to the immediate public (that is, research subjects and research sponsors) is relevant especially in those cases where the research was not designed specifically to produce knowledge for action. The question of the responsibility to disseminate the knowledge is inevitably accompanied by the question of ethical issues pertaining to the (mis)use of knowledge and the ethical dimensions of advocacy and partisanship. This paper will use a research project conducted by the author to explore these topics.

A biographical note and case study: Ethical dilemmas

In 2006, a group of researchers initiated a research project on social parenthood (Zaviršek 2008); my part in the project involved conducting research among homosexual parents in Slovenia. The research was finished in 2008, and an article was published the following year (Sobočan 2009).

By identifying that the situation of same-sex parented families (and especially children in these families) could be substantially improved by making certain changes to legislation dealing with partnership and family life, I began to ask myself what, as a researcher, my role could be in facilitating this amelioration. During the interviews, it became evident that my respondents

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5 One is reminded of the term “responsible intellectuals”, and of certain structural and feminist traditions and contemporary thinkers. See, for example, Chomsky 1967.

6 Examples of research that ‘produce knowledge for action’ include action research, user-led research and critical social research.

7 For me, this was also a question of human rights and social justice. In the case of the focus of the described research, one may, for example, refer to international human rights law, which promises equal enjoyment of family rights to everyone. Homosexual individuals in partnerships are denied, on the basis of their sexual orientation, specific rights
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(parents in same-sex parented families) were ready to start to look for answers and solutions to what they perceived as discrimination regarding their family constellations – together with social work services that deal with families (questions of custody, adoption, foster care and many others). I perceived that I had a dual role, which could be summarised in the following questions: How can I assist in answering questions that social workers confronted with same-sex parented families will be facing? and How can I administer in (family) policy making? These were questions of advocacy and education/informing, which I both considered forms of knowledge dissemination with regard to my completed research.

These two roles were also closely connected to the relationships I developed during my research. The parents/respondents invited me to their social and sports activities, which they had created as a safe and familiar environment for their children, some befriended me. Even if the respondents were not completely "satisfied" with my analysis (some, for example, disagreed with my prognosis of homophobic reactions and negative responses to the desired changes in the Family Code), they all started to perceive me as their ally in a way. A relationship of respect and trust had to be established from the outset, otherwise homosexual parents would not have been prepared to speak with me about their personal life and experiences (if, for example, they would have viewed me as a homophobe). But this relationship was in no way deceitful, as I had positioned myself (also in the research write-up) as someone who believes in equal opportunities and is against discrimination against homosexual parents and their children. Furthermore, as soon as the interviews were concluded (thus ending our "formal" relationship in a way, meaning that I no longer needed to be concerned about how my own views and information could influence their answers), a process of conscientisation took place, and we engaged in debates about rights, possibilities and experiences from other countries, the relevant concerning family and the right to enjoy their family life free from interference (contrary to art. 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, art. 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 17 European Convention on Human Rights). In many countries, their relationships exist outside of a legal framework, which means that they are also denied the right to found a family. Consequently, children living with parents of the same sex are denied the right to have the integrity of their family life respected (contrary to arts. 2,7,8,9 and 19 of the Convention of the Human Rights of the Child). For more information, see Hodson 2007.

Social justice, as the application of the concept of justice on the social level, is a concept that demands greater attention and discussion than it can be given here. In the case of the described research, I would speak of social justice in terms of individual rights and liberties, whereby equality must be ensured through means to make effective use of these freedoms. In practice, this means that individuals have a right to have a family and enjoy family rights and obligations, regardless of their sexual orientation, it also means that, in regard to family life, they should not be discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation.

8 This is a common dilemma in ethnographical field work research, see, for example, Ellis 2007.
knowledge for which I had acquired during the literature review process. All of
the facets of these relationships probably also created some expectations.

In spring 2007, ILGA9 Europe, together with Legebitra10 (Slovenia), or-
ganised an international conference on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender
(GLBT) families. It was probably the first time that the topic of non-hetero-
sexual families was made visible in the public discourse in Slovenia; the con-
ference was also met by a public initiative set up with the goal of protect-
ing the “sanctity of the proper family”, as one of the leaders said, through a
public debate and a petition. Some Slovenian GLBT activists responded to
this initiative, and right after my presentation at the conference, which was
about the research project, I was interviewed for a prime-time television piece
on same-sex parented families (this happened the following year as well). I
made sure that the television piece would only be aired with my permission,
lest my statements and presentation on the research be distorted. This was
followed by presentations of the research project, mainly to gay and lesbian
interest groups, and some non-scientific publication of results. This was also
an opportunity to inform the participants, other same-sex families and those
planning to have a family about the research analysis and possible further (po-
itical) steps towards more equal status for same-sex parented families. A press
conference was organised when the results of the whole research project were
published; we faced attempts to discredit our research and voices against the
anti-discriminatory changes we proposed. A couple of (popular) articles were
written, and the authors asked me to speak about the subject and to provide
the contact information of homosexual parents. I contacted the parents myself
and informed them of the journalists’ interest, some of them responded, saying
that they felt it would be beneficial to make life in same-sex families more vis-
ible and less unknown or “abstract”. The respondents have expressed the view
that the attention generated by the research (the first in this field in Slovenia)
contributed to the “visibility” of same-sex families and the public articulation
of the issues and problems they face due to, for example, the deficient legal
rights of homosexual couples. Visibility was, in their view, necessary to start
to change the family law and the general public’s attitude towards homosexual
parents, who were generally perceived as non-existent in Slovenia. Thus my
decision regarding my responsiveness to the media was also necessarily con-
ected to my relationship with them (which, as I already mentioned, was not
a “neutral” relationship). Additionally, during the research process, I identified
an urgent need to ameliorate the situation of parents and children in same-sex
families and to raise awareness through enhancing “familiarity” with represen-
tations in environments outside the homes (kindergartens, schools etc.). It

10 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trasgender Youth Organization.
became obvious that images of various kinds of family life have to be introduced starting at an early age. So when I was asked to be part of an educational program for carers and teachers (not as a part of my employment), I decided to participate in a teaching context, but only on the condition that I be able to choose to speak about non-heteronormative family realities. At the same time, I took the opportunity to raise awareness and discuss these issues in the setting of social work education by designing lectures on this particular topic in the scope of my teaching responsibilities.

It is necessary to point out that the media's interest in the research grew in a context defined by two very important issues: in the political arena, promises had been made by some political parties in the pre-election period to deal with discriminatory legislation (towards homosexual individuals in partnerships); and a revision of the Family Code was being developed for some time. This situation encouraged political figures to address the issue of homosexuality and parenthood in the public debate, as it was crucial for them to take a stand on this issue. More than half a year later, when it became clear that the new Family Code would make homosexual partners equal to heterosexual partners in terms of family duties and rights, interest in the research and those involved grew. This means that speaking about a piece of research inevitably became a political act, constructed as such by the particular political context and the media.

Another consideration is connected with the media (as it is more than once visible in the present paper): the attitude of the general Slovenian media towards homosexuality and parenthood. As an unfamiliar topic, it was not certain how the media would “pick up” on the issue in what is generally perceived as a homophobic environment. The damage that could have be done by engaging with the media would have been practically irreparable: in the event that most of the journalists would have, for example, tried to construct a negative image of the homosexual parents and misused the research results, public opinion would have worsened, with the result that the respondents probably would have again shut themselves off in the safety of their privacy. The interviewees in my research would have felt abused and regretted disclosing their lives to the researcher, and would probably not want to be involved in any further dialogue.

Following the research and its publication, I have been engaged in the following issues, which I perceive as ethical dilemmas:

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11 If it were not for this context, the research might not have raised any interest at all.
12 Nevertheless, only one (right-wing) politician spoke out when the research was initially released.
13 Here I refer only to the dilemmas that have emerged since the research project was completed (that is, more general dilemmas that occur while conducting research are not discussed).
• Should I assume the role of an advocate of what I perceive could aid in changing the symbolic and legal position of a certain group, thus bettering people's lives?
• Am I endangering the “scientific-objective” value of the research project by taking on the role of an advocate?
• What is my “duty” in regard to reciprocity and what is my “duty” in regard to working towards social change?
• Could I work with the research community again if I take on/decline this role?
• Is the call to assume the role of an advocate, or even an activist, also coming from the community I researched, and will I be able to meet their expectations? Or is it only coming from the media and scientific community, who need someone who could be recognised as an expert? Also, is it in my personal interest to be recognised as an expert, as this is a good career opportunity?
• Do I have to respond to every request (i.e. from journalists) to speak as an expert or do I have the “right” to choose those environments where I know my advocating role will be more successful? Or, conversely, is it more important to choose the most difficult “battles” (speaking in places where I will be confronted only by opposing voices)? Should I be completely honest with all the knowledge I have accumulated during my research, or should I be careful and plan which information I will share?
• Am I required (for the benefit of the value of the research and the efficiency of my advocacy) to monitor the use and reception of the research findings and my advocating role, and to intervene when I see that the data is being misused?
• How great a share of the responsibility am I prepared to take if my research gets misused? What if speaking to the media and other audiences proves to be more harmful than beneficial?

Knowledge production

The idea that scientific inquiry should not only attempt to describe the world, but also be concerned with changing it, can be traced back to Karl Marx and even further (Lobkowicz, cited by Hammersley 1995: 61). Is it possible, or even desirable, for (social) scientists to adopt a disinterested attitude towards the social world? Lincoln and Canella propose that social research in general needs an ethical reconceptualisation so it that it could examine and challenge social systems, explore egalitarian systems and construct a non-violent revolutionary ethical consciousness (Lincoln and Cannella 2009: 279). Such ethical research would reveal and actively challenge social systems, discourses, and institutions that are oppressive and that perpetuate injustice and inequality. The purpose of research should no longer be to represent or know the
Other, but to examine and change the systems and discourses within which the researchers function.

The Social Science Research Council\textsuperscript{14} mentions “putting knowledge to work on new problems” and the value of knowledge for practical action, policy and debate on major public issues.\textsuperscript{15} “Use” is now practically inseparable from the “science” of research: even if the knowledge being sought is for cognitive purposes only, it is highly unlikely that it will have no implications for the social world. The very conditions under which research is being produced today are almost always connected to those who are potential “users” of the knowledge – the financial or political sponsors of research. To use an example from the European context, even a brief look at the documents of the Seventh Framework Programme, the European Union’s main instrument for research funding in Europe\textsuperscript{16}, shows the high demand for efficiency, problem solving and high applicability value. It can probably be claimed that funding effects, to an ever greater extent, what gets researched and how, as well as who is doing the research and how the data will be used/disseminated. Aldred has noted that even the research environment has become commodified and contractual (2008: 888). Whose needs does the research actually serve? would therefore be one question posed by critical social work\textsuperscript{17}; another would be: To whom is the researcher morally responsible – herself/himself, the researched, society or someone/something else? (Ferdinand et al. 2007: 521).

The answer(s) to these questions are not straightforward. It can, however, be posited that the practice of research involves relationships, knowledge creation and exclusion, and usually the construction of privilege (Lincoln and Canella 2009: 273). The existence of different kinds of knowledge can be observed, and knowledges can be classified according to the degree to which they are recognised as such: some kinds of knowledge are more accepted than others and, in this hierarchy, certain perspectives and research are more privileged than others. Does it follow that all research is also necessarily political? Hammersley (1995) writes that there are three different questions to be asked in relation to the question of whether social research is political: Can research be non-political? Does research as practised tend to be political? Should research be political? It depends on how one defines “research” and “political” (ibid.). one of the main arguments for research being political involves recognising the various ways in which value judgements are

\textsuperscript{14} A U.S.-based, independent non-profit organisation that has been seeking to advance social sciences since 1923.

\textsuperscript{15} See: http://www.ssrc.org/about/mission/ (26 July 2009).


\textsuperscript{17} See, for example, Fook 2003.
implicated in the research process – this means juxtaposing the political character of research with claims of value neutrality (ibid.: 109). According to Hammersley, values are relevant to social research in four ways: all research is value committed; all research requires external and internal conditions for it to be a pursuit; all research is grounded in presumptions which cannot be claimed to be beyond any possible doubt; and all research has material effects (ibid.: 112). Discussions of science as value-free or value-laden have frequently shifted between the positions of instrumental rationality, which can, as many have noted, produce detrimental effects, and so-called biased research and the traps of ideologisation.

Feminist writing, for example, has shown that attempts to claim that research can be value-neutral or to “cleanse” knowledge of all values cannot achieve their goal of objectivity. Such objectivity (that is, that which claims to be value-free) is, in Harding’s view, “weak” objectivity, meaning that it conceals values which are not explicated; “strong” objectivity, in contrast, is that which includes a systematic examination of background beliefs and agendas that are, among other things, the sources of bias in research (Harding 1991). Objectivity in this sense can be seen as a socially produced and mediated value, strongly connected with the issue of power; this can be (according to feminist theory, for example) addressed with the help of reflexivity, a concept developed in feminist methodology. Reflexivity involves making the power structure explicit; explaining how the research is framed and how the research process and agenda are constructed; and exploring and acknowledging the social situatedness of the researcher (Hartsock 1998). Reflexivity is one way that researchers can account for the knowledge they produce.

Considering such issues, feminist, critical, anti-racist, anti-oppressive and postmodernist analyses have put forth the argument that social research is intrinsically political. Research and science cannot be detached from the values and agendas behind them. Values in research are also acknowledged in social work – for example, the British Association of Social Workers’ Code of Ethics addresses values in research:

The aims and process of social work research, including choice of methodology, and the use made of findings, will be congruent with the social work values of respect for human dignity and worth and commitment to social justice...Researchers should seek to ensure that the research in which they are engaged contributes to empowering service users, to promoting their welfare and to improving their access to economic and social resources and

18 In his view, these are not features that make research distinctively political, as they can also be found in other human activities.

19 Extreme examples of this include experiments on humans for the sake of scientific discovery and the ‘greater good’ (experiments conducted during the Second World War, the Tuskegee syphilis experiment etc.).
seek to work together with disempowered groups, individuals and communities to devise, articulate and achieve research agendas which respect fundamental human rights and aim towards social justice (BASW 2002: 14).

This approach does not (necessarily) mean that research produced according to this congruence with values cannot be described as objective knowledge (that is, knowledge which serves the interest of science)\(^{20}\). As mentioned above, there are different kinds of knowledge, with some kinds valued above others, so it is (sometimes) crucial for research to be recognised as scientific in order to be able to claim symbolic and political power.

The concern with perceived objectivity was also one of the dilemmas I faced when I assumed the role of an advocate. I was concerned that the “scientific-objective” value of the research project would be attacked by those looking to discredit it, and with the effects that such attacks could have on the efforts to create the first research on this specific topic in Slovenia. Would the project be harmed, and its possible use hindered? If so, what would this mean for the educational institution where I work and the attitude towards the discipline which I represent?

When the research was first publicly presented at a press conference, it was instantly attacked in the media by a right-wing politician, who characterised it as propaganda, claiming that “such research is creating social problems instead of solving them, which should be the goal of social work,” and that “the tax-payers shouldn’t finance such experiments with potentially tragic consequences.”\(^{21}\) It was interesting to observe how much power was being ascribed to a single research project, as if it had the power to change entire policies and even “endanger the institution of family as we know it.”\(^{22}\)

Such attacks can be harmless if there is an opportunity to present the methods used in the research, the careful scrutiny to which the analysis was

\(^{20}\) As noted above, the term objectivity has been contested, and is used here to describe scientific, systematic and rigorous use of methods of research and analysis, standards of verifiability and truthfulness (objectivity meaning that no distortion, appropriation etc. of research material or results has been made). Again, objectivity in this sense is close to the ethical standards of research.

\(^{21}\) Primc, A., Oploditev žensk brez partnerja je nesprejemljiva. The Slovenian news daily Dobro jutro, 24 March 2009. http://www.dobrojutro.net/novice/slovenija/126952 (18 August 2009; only in Slovenian language). The “tragic consequences” which Primc, a right-wing politician, is speaking about would, in his view, be that, if homosexuals were granted same rights as heterosexuals, it would be legally possible for children to “legally” grow up in homosexual families. This is, in his view, a double peril, as it would endanger the “family” in the form which he identifies as the only “proper” and “correct” one, and would mean a real danger for children growing up with adults in a homosexual relationship.

\(^{22}\) Ibid. As noted above, interest in the research and the controversy is fuelled by the political context and legislative changes.
subjected and the elements of verifiability; however, the media (when this is where the public debate takes place) usually doesn't provide enough space for such considerations, or the damage is already done by the first simplistic, populist claims. In a way, this reaction encouraged me to speak about the research, not only as an advocate for social change, but also as a representative of a discipline and institution that were under attack.

The research has become not only political in the sense described earlier in this section, but also in the sense of political action. The goal of the research project was to accumulate knowledge within a discipline, but it soon grew beyond this framework.

The decision to speak out is never simple or without potential negative outcomes. Considerations can take account of the consequences for the researched group, for the researchers and their institution and/or discipline etc. The "winner" of the public debate can never be predicted with absolute certainty, as this depends on a number of factors: who are the speakers are and what discipline and institution they represent (proportionate to the status and power of these); who joins in the debate and who the supporters are (and who is more supported in the environment where the debate is taking place – e.g. the media); how the arguments are negotiated against a background of cultural and other traditions etc. The power structures on many levels are crucial in such a debate: the fact that a research had solid and scientifically grounded arguments and was fuelled by values and agendas rooted in democratic, non-discriminatory and inclusive principles does not guarantee "victory" on the political, or even on the moral, level.

**Dissemination of knowledge and knowledge (mis)use**

I ultimately decided to enter the public debate on same-sex families in Slovenia for three main reasons: there were no observable or foreseeable negative effects resulting from my research that would violate the principles of equality, non-discrimination, etc.; I was supported in my decision by my researched group; and I genuinely believe that research can be used as a tool for immediate intervention in (social work) goals of promoting social change. The latter means that a social work researcher can stand alongside a social worker who is trying to influence policy making and structural changes.

A kind of political power is inscribed in social work research and practice, and research can be used to achieve changes; at the same time, studies show that it is relatively rare for researchers to take on the task of working with their research materials and findings after the research has been finished or published. An analysis by Peled and Leichtentrütt (2002) has shown that only a small portion of published qualitative and mixed methods research studies in social work address issues of the researchers' willingness, importance or responsibility in regard to ethical considerations of responsibilities beyond
gathering and properly analysing the data and providing recommendations. A sample of 57 research studies published in social work journals prior to 2002 revealed that most articles did not discuss ways in which the study may have promoted participants’ access to economic and social capital, despite the fact that this is the value most often stated in social work codes of ethics (ibid.: 154). Benefits for the research participants were not even mentioned in most cases. As a general trend, the authors concluded that ethical considerations were of marginal importance in most phases of research in the studies reviewed (ibid.: 160). And most of the studies reviewed were concerned with empowering the research population and recommended policy changes to increase the population’s access to economic resources or promote their access to social services. What Peled and Leichtentritt have observed is that recommendations directed at policy makers and social organisations reflect a distinction between researchers as knowledge producers on the one hand and those who are responsible for the implementation of knowledge (policy makers etc.) on the other (ibid.: 157). This leads to the important realisation that the research dissemination (questions of how, to whom, where, when and by whom) becomes an ethical issue, an ethical concern. Very few articles, the authors note, stated that research results were brought to the attention of those who have the power to use them for the benefit of the populations involved (ibid.).

Shaw writes that the ethical dimension of research utilisation is rarely addressed (2008: 410). She takes a publication entitled Improving the Use of Research in Social Care Practice (2004), a handbook of recent comprehensive development of models of research use in the social work and social care field, as an example. This publication doesn’t make a single reference to research utilisation ethics. The reason why ethics of research use might not be a widely developed topic could also lie in the realisation that ethical guidelines in research may be partly constructed to protect the institutional interests, “without necessarily providing an effective means to address the moral obligations and responsibilities of researchers in relation to the production of social research” (Truman, cited by Humphries 2008: 20).

A small “experiment” using the topic that I have been researching (same-sex family life) revealed similar results. A search in the electronic database of Sociological Abstracts23 returned 54 results (articles and publications). None

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23 CSA, available at: www.csa.com (26 July 2009 and 27 August 2009, both dates gave the same result). The search was carried out in the subject area “Social Sciences” and with the query: “(same-sex families) or (homosexual families) or (homosexual parents) or (homosexual parenting)” and “social work”, which means that the data found were related to social work as well as same-sex families (because different names exist to describe families where both parents are of the same-sex, the denominators for this query were chosen according to the highest frequency of use in articles and relevant literature). The time span selected for the query was: ‘earliest to 2010’.

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Ethics in/after social work research
of the abstracts mentions that the researcher tried to implement any kind of changes, create an action plan, or actively promote social change\textsuperscript{24}. Some abstracts describe that the articles provide knowledge and information that can be used by learners, in practice, and for further research:

- Suggestions for practical solutions (Mazor 2004, Matthews and Cramer 2005, Erwin 2007, Short 2007);
- Recommendations and information for policy and practice (Buxton 2005, Ryan 2007);

Only 14 of the 54 abstracts (less than 25\%) explicitly express that the article either provides information or recommendations for practice or policy, and only 4 give suggestions or models for practical solutions. None of them (0\%) express the active role of the researcher in facilitating the processes of change or ethical considerations. The selection of articles is in a way arbitrary and very limited, all the same, it does provide a sample of research from this specific topic. Also, it must be kept in mind that scientific journals have different demands and strict page limits, which militate against reporting “post-research” activities. Furthermore, to a certain extent, this topic tailors the possibilities of research methodologies, and may present constraints regarding, for example, employing action research. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the researchers should limit their research projects to writing-up and publication in a scientific journal.

What could be the reasons why, many times, research remains in the framework of publication for an expert audience? The implications of being an advocate for a group are multi-faceted. Advocacy gives rise to many questions and dilemmas, but the most important is probably rooted in questions about what it means to fight for certain rights and ideas: Can a certain set of rights conflict with other sets of rights? In my view, this dilemma has to be dealt with and thought out before a researcher decides to become an advocate for a certain idea. In the particular case of the research discussed in this paper, I was convinced that, in general, the legal rights of this group of parents (as far as it could be envisaged) don’t contradict the principles of equality, non-discriminatory practice etc.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} I had studied most of the articles featured in this abstract search (49 of 54) in connection with my research project. I can therefore state that the abstracts generally don’t leave out or dismiss information in the articles that would speak of researchers’ activities after their research was completed.

\textsuperscript{25} What is interesting to observe in such cases is how a discourse of attributing certain rights or broadening the concept of a certain right can be constructed as negative: rights that would now include more persons are interpreted by some as rights that would cause damage to existing rights.
When I started to speak about the research outside the scope of publishing the scientific article, new dilemmas arose. In addition to issues about the interests of those who funded the research, the following question came up: Provided the research organisation is giving the researcher enough “freedom”, is the researcher granted the “authority” to speak by the researched group? And is he/she himself/herself committed to doing this? In this regard, some possible dilemmas (which, for example, I have been dealing with) include:

1. **Why do it?** What factual changes can be brought about by the researcher? It seems that there is still a divide between those who produce knowledge and those who are supposed to use and employ it. Policy makers usually look for answers to the question “how”, while research many times gives the answers to “what” and “who”. Nevertheless, social change is not just changing laws and policies, but also influencing the consciousness and social attitudes in society.

2. In speaking about the research, I would also be speaking about those whom I have done my research with; my ideas about what changes should be brought about would be to a great extent justified by “using” the voices of the people that I interviewed. I would be recognised as partly “voicing” their ideas, and this means that we should have a similar vision of the changes we are fighting for.

3. There is also the “utilitarian” dilemma associated with how much the dissemination of results will actually accomplish. In many cases, the researcher cannot know for sure whether the change he/she wants to facilitate will have a mostly positive or negative effect (a perspective gain can also turn into a loss). Researchers cannot control the multitude of variables that facilitate or prevent social transformation, and the researcher needs to consider whether “unanticipated side effects” of the research itself or of efforts to use it to effect social change are likely to undermine or enhance the intended goal (Mertens and Ginsberg 2008: 500). Where qualitative research is intended to be used for social policy issues, there is the dilemma of whether “findings could be used to worsen the situation of the target population in some way” (Finch, cited in Shaw 2008: 409). Such harmful use was also at the centre of my considerations when thinking about which environments I would feel secure speaking about the research I conducted in and where (with whom) I might choose not to speak due to the acute possibility of hostile feedback and distortion and, above all, which data can or should be shared. Lack of experience communicating with the media was also a concern, as such experience may be essential to securing the possibility of a good reception.

4. Closely related to (3) is the dilemma of what knowledge can be shared and in what way, and of whether, for political reasons, certain information is
In a study of 21 cases of research on same-sex families, Stacey and Biblarz (2001) have observed that most of the researchers decided to speak about their findings not as differences between different-sex families and same-sex families, but as positive similarities. The reason for this is that difference in this context is usually perceived as a deficit of some kind and interpreted negatively. How research findings are communicated to the public influences how data will be received and how it can be (mis)used.

There are also issues of reciprocity between the researcher and the researched population, and a key question is: How does the researcher's role as an advocate influence his/her relationship with the researched? Reporting on the effects of her published work about ethnographic research conducted in a fishing village, Ellis (2007) says that she “disenchanted” her respondents, making it impossible for her to enter the community as a researcher again. This example pertains to methods of data gathering, trust, deception, and the role of the researcher in the process of researching; I was unsuccessful in finding examples of a dynamic between the researcher and the researched in the process of data dissemination of the kind discussed here. I too was concerned that I might find myself denied entry to the research community – mainly due to the fact that whereas I could let them have some control over what is being published (before publication, the scientific article was given to my respondents; if they had any comments on my findings, we could work on them together to a certain extent), this would not be the case with public appearances. One possible solution would involve regularly monitoring how my appearances in the media, for example, were received by the people I interviewed and consulting the internet forum where most of my respondents post their views.

These are just a few examples pertaining to “immediate” agency. In my view, these factors could be alleviated to a certain degree if greater care were shown for issues associated with managing risks that arise from the reality of limited control over knowledge that is being communicated to different audiences (examples of such issues might be how to manage distortion, how to deal with the manipulation with data etc). This also necessarily entails educating researchers on how to deal with different groups, how to communicate knowledge and how to influence a positive impact. This appeal goes beyond enacting ethical conduct in the research process; to an equal or greater degree, it applies to what happens after the research study is written and articulates researchers’ ethical orientation in using knowledge that could make a contribution to the greater equality of all people in a given society.

26 Here I will not return to questions of objectivity, absolutes etc. I already recognise that there might be a ‘bias’ inscribed in taking on the role of an advocate which doesn’t result in distortion of data or deception, but in being careful that the data is not misused and that any information that could be interpreted in a way that would be harmful is transferred with greater care, strong arguments etc.
Epilogue: Social work research

As I have tried to show, research and knowledge has to be communicated not only to “expert” groups, but also to the general public. In this, social work researchers partake, or should partake, of the aspect of social work which entails mobilising “the conscience of the community” (Towle, cited by Brill 2001: 233).

Does social work’s orientation towards promoting “social change, problem-solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being,” (Ethics in social work 2004) relate specifically to social work and research? In social work, research is, as McLaughlin (2007) writes, an essential yet underused tool for social work practice and education; Pawson et al. (2003) identify research knowledge as one of the sources of knowledge in social work (together with organisational, practitioner, user and policy community knowledge). Research for social work can thus be useful in at least three ways: by providing a knowledge base and a reference that can be consulted etc.; by serving as an important tool for social work professionalisation and academisation; and as a source of support in the political sense. The ongoing debate about the link between practice and theory in social work and research has important implications for social work, as does the long tradition of research in social work (Dominelli 2005). Recent research-mindedness in social work refers to acknowledging “which values and interests pervade research studies, the knowledge produced by them and the policies that are implemented as a result of them” (Humphries 2008: 4).

Ethics indisputably permeates any research, and it is important that questions of ethical practice in research and the ethical foundations of research be addressed along a broad spectrum of issues that encompasses research processes, methods, and purposes; forms of interpretation; and issues connected with the values and ethical decision making of those conducting the research. Certain research methods are closer to social work research that works towards social justice (for example, participatory research, action research, case study research, critical social research, discourse analysis, ethnographic research; see Humphries [2008]). And the last twenty years has seen a growing number of attempts to reduce the distance between the researcher and the researched (participatory and user-led research, for example), often with an agenda that explicitly includes altering the power imbalance (Boser 2006: 10); at the same time, very little support has been provided for developing ethical frameworks.

27 The latter was addressed, for example, by Prpić, who conducted a research on ethics among Croatian researchers. She speaks also about what she considers to be the two problems in analyses of research ethics: the first one is that the value-normative level of research is separated from the behavioural level of science ethics (professional standards are not equal to everyday research practice); and the second is that the research ethics are reduced to cognitive standards, thus neglecting social relations and considerations in scientific work and profession (Prpić 2005: 29).
that go beyond the individual researcher-researched relationship. In today's hierarchical, corporate and bureaucratised societies, the practical consequence of this deficit is that researchers are left unprepared for conflicts with elites and organisations. Ethical guidelines and analyses that also focus on the hierarchies and power relations structuring research relationships are needed (Aldred 2008: 894). Analyses with ethical considerations and models of communicating knowledge to the general public – and especially to expert and political groups (as decision makers) – would provide researchers with practical guidelines for assuming responsibility for social change.

A recently published book on social work research ethics leaves no doubt as to what can or should be considered ethical: for the transformative paradigm, which is the focus of the authors of The Handbook of Social Research Ethics, ethical choices are only those which support the pursuit of social justice and human rights (Mertens and Ginsberg 2009). A researcher adhering to the transformative paradigm will first and foremost ask himself/herself, at all stages of the process – from the selection of the research focus to the presentation of research findings – “How can my research at this time and place contribute to social justice?” (Mertens and Ginsberg 2008: 501).

Such a perception of research is attentive to its analytical and political direction. Ioakimidis has noted that, as of late, this direction has been neglected or suppressed, and has stated the view that the current dominant research trends conform closely to the logic of “welfare business” (monitoring inspection, evaluation etc.), instead of trying to ‘penetrate the structural reasons for inequality, poverty, deprivation and other ‘demons’ that keep service users in the eye of the cyclone.” (Ioakimidis 2008: 43-44). Nevertheless, he goes on to state that social work research cannot avoid its part in the wider political play, and that, consequently, it is of grave importance not only to accept its political nature, but also to engage in intervening and affecting the political arena and policy-making processes (ibid.: 45).

In her analysis of the revised NASW code of ethics, Brill states that social work has significantly moved away from the belief that political activity is unprofessional (Brill 2001: 232). And McLaughlin writes that if social work is to survive, it must engage with contemporary debates and seek to shape, as much as it is shaped by, external events (McLaughlin 2007: 186).

According to Staub-Bernasconi, of equal importance to analysing what rights people are entitled to is determining whose duty it is to promote, implement and protect these rights (2005: 101). To a certain extent, this is also an ethical responsibility of researchers as those who also have the means to produce and promote knowledge that can contribute to identifying answers to, for example, questions of how to improve the well-being of people. While it might be naïve to believe that researchers can directly influence actual policy making, this does not mean that they should not claim the role of stakeholders and “experts” in the policy-making process, or that they can simply neglect com-
communicating this knowledge to practitioners, those affected by it, and the public. Policy making does depend on various contexts and ideological, economic and political interests; however, one must consider the range of reasons for policy makers to be informed about research products and expertise not directly from researchers, but, as Vessuri writes, mainly through other channels: aides, consultants, advisory bodies, think tanks and the media (Vessuri 2002: 139).

While it is possible for different kinds of knowledge transfer vessels to further generate creative solutions and ideas, it is more likely that knowledge will be distorted, misunderstood, and misused in this process. Ethical standards and especially ethical considerations should therefore be broadened to include issues of research use and knowledge dissemination. A research commitment that is not impartial to human suffering and that identifies unjust processes and “makes them known”, ensures that subordinated voices are not silenced and unheard, and is “entirely compatible with the best traditions of rigorous and systematic research approaches.” (Humphries 2008: 31; on the transformative paradigm see Mertens and Ginsberg 2009).

Brill believes that social workers who are prepared to act more assertively on their social justice responsibilities are crucial to the future of social work (2001: 223); researchers, as knowledge producers in social work, can aid social work practitioners in this endeavour by advocating for social change.

**References**


Management practice involves decision making, and many of these decisions involve values and ethical choices. Healy and Pine described the many ethical responsibilities of social work managers as follows: “Managers must understand professional and organizational ethical obligations, make moral choices, set the tone and climate to facilitate ethical practice by others, ensure congruence between professional codes of ethics and the organization’s mission, programs and work environment, and protect the organization from legal risk related to ethical lapses” (2007: 81). Those in positions of significant authority, including executive directors and presidents of non-profit agencies and heads of governmental agencies, have particularly critical roles.

In the current context, managers of social work services are under increasing performance pressures. These pressures have been building over the past few decades due to an almost global emphasis on efficiency and mounting critiques of the ways social services have been managed and delivered. The global financial crisis of 2009 exacerbated the situation, while at the same time increasing human need. In this climate, the values of human dignity, human rights and compassionate services are under attack.

This chapter will discuss the roles of social work managers and their ethical responsibilities in the context of the changing global financial and ideological environment. Particular attention will be given to the impact of managerialism as a philosophy and set of expectations. Ethical dilemmas and principles in social work management will be addressed and selected professional codes of ethics will be examined in terms of their usefulness for managers facing difficult ethical choices. The potential for professional ethics to counter the trend toward managerialism will be considered.

Role of social service managers

Social workers have always been involved in the administration or management of social services. The founders of social work ran settlement houses and planned and managed emerging social services and social work educational
programs. The profession's identification of management as a specific discipline within social work has been a more recent development in many countries, although administration was included in the 1928 definition of social work (International Conference of Social Work 1929). There is still a debate on whether social work offers unique approaches to management practice or theory.

Edoho (2001) presents three perspectives on management theory and practice. A dominant one has been the universalist perspective of "management is management"; according to this view, management is a science, and its scientific techniques are therefore applicable to all settings. This universalist philosophy has led to the application of managerialist techniques of the corporate world to non-profit and government sectors. It has also led to the application of management techniques generated in the US to other countries, especially through the influence of international financial institutions and aid donors. The "management as science" perspective contrasts with the particularist view that treats management as a context-specific art, and with the synthetic perspective – a synthesis that sees management as both an art and a science, as a practice that responds to the realities of the situation, but uses accumulated management knowledge and adapts it as needed. Management in social services has reflected each of these perspectives. The particularist view led to the promotion of practitioners to management positions, assuming that the most important considerations were knowledge of services and context and some vaguely defined leadership qualities. Dissatisfaction with service management and growing emphasis on management techniques led some to assert that any well-trained manager could manage the social services – hence "management is management". Thus, managers with degrees in business or with corporate management experience were hired to lead social service agencies. The synthetic perspective is best reflected by schools of social work that offer management or administration courses of study. Management is seen as optimally combining knowledge of social work and social agency settings and professional values with knowledge of management theory and skills in modern management techniques.

There are several paths to management positions within social service agencies, reflecting the three perspectives. Some managers are promoted out of direct care social work positions because they were identified as particularly competent in their social work roles. These managers have little or no specific training in management prior to their promotions. Others seek and secure social service management positions because they have had specific preparation in administrative knowledge and skills within their social work degree programmes. Finally, some social agency managers come from other fields, such as business or public administration, and have no professional identification with the field of social work. As part of encroaching managerialism, service managers are increasingly drawn from business and public management backgrounds, with no specific training or experience in social work and no allegiance to professional social work ethics.
The social work profession is widely viewed as a value-driven profession. “Ethical awareness is a fundamental part of the professional practice of social workers” (IFSW 2004: preface). Professional social workers have argued that it is important to ensure professional leadership of social service agencies, largely to ensure that services are guided by ethical principles. All managers should be concerned with ethical practice; at the same time, the professional social work manager faces many ethical imperatives. Therefore, this chapter will focus on ethical issues for social work managers.

A number of factors have contributed to the increased interest in ethics and leadership or management. Among these have been widely publicised scandals and examples of unethical leadership in non-profit and social service agencies (Gibelman and Gelman 2001, 2004); court decisions in some jurisdictions that have underscored the liability of professionals and their agencies for poor or unethical practice; cases involving ethical dilemmas that capture the public attention (such as end of life care); the emergence of new ethical challenges caused by technology; and the increasing scarcity of resources for social services and entitlements, which heightens attention to issues of distributive justice.

Managers’ ethical responsibilities and ethical failures

There are a number of competing perspectives on ethical responsibilities of social work managers. Are such individuals first and foremost social workers? Or do they begin to lose their professional identification as they assume management roles? To what extent are professional ethical principles relevant and helpful to management practice? These are among the questions commonly raised about management ethics in social work. An article entitled “Ethics in Managerial Behavior: Come on! Who Are You Trying to Kid?” (Gummer) appeared in a social work journal in 1984. While the author did explore important ethical issues, the subtitle expresses the public perception that managers give low priority to ethics. This perception has been fed by numerous widely publicised examples of unethical behaviour by managers in all sectors, including profit/corporate, public, and non-profit. These include clearly unethical acts of fraud, embezzlement and the production and sale of harmful products, the “grey areas” of excessive executive compensation in the face of layoffs of employees, and careless oversight that fails to detect significant organisational failures. Some of these ethical failures have occurred in social service agencies. A major scandal rocked the United Way of America when it was revealed that its Chief Executive Officer had used money intended for charity for personal expenses and to pay for a lavish lifestyle (Gibelman and Gelman 2001). In several studies of highly publicised ethical failures in non-profit organisations, Gibelman and Gelman cite examples from a number of countries. In 2001, they identified examples of ethical wrongdoing in Australia, Ecuador,
England, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Scotland and South Africa, as well as in the US. In a further study in 2004, they describe examples from Denmark, Scotland, England, Ukraine, Iraq, Bangladesh, the US and South Africa. Types of wrongdoing included misrepresentation in fundraising, favouritism in awarding contracts and grants, lying in funding applications and reports, using agency funds for personal expenses, and sexual misconduct.

A survey of 558 employees at non-profit organisations in the United States conducted by the Ethics Resource Center found that the employees had observed considerable ethical misconduct in their organisations:

- 24% had observed managers putting their own interests ahead of the organisation's interest;
- 21% observed lying to employees;
- 19% observed abusive behaviour;
- 19% observed misreporting of hours worked;
- 18% observed internet abuse;
- 16% observed safety violations;
- 14% observed lying to stakeholders;
- 12% observed improper hiring practices;
- 11% observed discrimination.

A wide range of unethical behaviours was observed by smaller percentages of employees surveyed, including misuse of confidential information, altering records, and stealing (ERC 2008). Ethical lapses were similar to those observed in a study of business organisations. Among business respondents, the top types of unethical behaviours observed were abusive or intimidating behaviour towards employees (21%), lying to employees, customers, vendors, or the public (19%), and placing employee interests ahead of organisational interests (18%) (ERC 2007). The good news was that the ERC concluded that "nonprofit organizations have the strongest ethics standing over any other sector"; unfortunately, it also found that "integrity in the nonprofit sector is eroding and misconduct is on the rise" (2008: viii). The results of the ERC study were not disaggregated by sub-sector, therefore these results include all types of non-profit organisations, and not only those managed by social workers or providing social services.

**Greater responsibility**

Managers are sometimes the offenders by directly committing unethical acts; other times, they are indirectly accountable for the ethical lapses that occur under their supervision. The ethical responsibilities of social work managers can be summed up in one phrase: greater responsibility (Congress 1997). Although it may seem that the power of those occupying middle and upper management...
positions in social services is quite limited, management positions nonetheless embody power. With power come special responsibilities to exercise it carefully and ethically by recognising rights, being fair and just, avoiding harm, and demonstrating honesty and integrity. As Ife put it, the greater power of a manager's position means “an unequal power relationship with at least the potential for oppressive practice and the denial of human rights” (2001: 179). Thus, many ethical codes emphasise the concept of the greater ethical responsibility of those in management positions. Managers who are professional social workers have all of the ethical obligations of their profession and are bound by the provisions of relevant codes of professional ethics. Therefore, the social work ethical principles of respect for self-determination, confidentiality, informed consent, and non-discrimination apply to managers in their professional functions. In addition, they have ethical duties and obligations that flow from the power and authority inherent in their management positions. Managers are likely to have ethical responsibilities to a large number of stakeholders, including the clients or consumers served by the organisation, staff members, collaborating and competing agencies in their environment, funding bodies and individuals, policy makers, the profession, and the general public/society. Their roles are complex and often fragmented in a practice environment that is uncertain and often turbulent. At times, these multiple obligations may conflict. Nonetheless, “strengthening organizational integrity in a company...begins with senior leaders who know that ethics flow from emphasizing underlying values, not mere technical compliance” (Rion 2009).

This idea of greater responsibility is underscored in some national social work ethical codes. The Australian code, for example, states that managers have specific ethical responsibilities in addition to those spelled out in the rest of the code (section 4.4.2). The code of the Association of Social Workers in Turkey indicates, in the section on Obligations for Employers, that they “have to make institutions conscious about ethic principles and standards and perform their applications according to the requirements” (section 3.08). The Codes of the US National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the British Association of Social Workers’ (BASW) Code also reflect this principle, listing specific responsibilities of administrators in addition to the sections affecting all social workers. These examples reflect the principle that those in positions of authority have an obligation to facilitate ethical practice. It should be noted that not all social work ethical documents address the special responsibilities of social work managers; among the ethical codes examined for this chapter, that of Singapore does not mention managers or supervisors, and the International Principles are also silent on any special responsibilities.

In his book on social work management ethics, Levy writes: “Executives are the duly appointed monitors of the manifest values and ethics of social organizations, and the symbolic representations of them in and outside the organization” (1982: 144). Managers’ ethical responsibilities are tied to their
span of control. While individual social workers are responsible for their own behaviour, the practice and behaviour of managers affect employees, agency policies, and the overall reputation of the organisation in the community. Their approach to ethics often determines the capacity of others in the organisation to practice ethically. Ethical lapses by managers can have serious consequences for their organisations and therefore for those served by the organisations; these include legal actions, loss of resources, and loss of reputation.

Managers’ responsibilities begin with their own behaviour. Like all other social workers, they are obligated to behave in an ethical manner and avoid unethical actions. They are bound by the ethical obligations expressed in professional codes and in many agency codes of conduct, including principles of service, integrity, social justice, competence, avoidance of conflicts of interest, and the primacy of client needs and interests. Beyond avoidance of unethical acts, "how the leader behaves as a role model, exemplifying certain values in speech and actions and demonstrating such qualities as empathy, loyalty, and self-sacrifice" is an important element of ethical leadership (Manning 2003: 218).

In their direct supervision of staff members, managers must encourage ethical behaviour. In one public child welfare agency, a staff member reported that her supervisor had asked her to put untrue information into a case record. She was told to state that she had observed illegal drugs in the client’s apartment, when in fact she had never observed illegal substances. When the worker complained to a higher-level child welfare manager, that manager supported the supervisor and told the social worker to put the claim in the case record in order to strengthen the agency’s child neglect case against the parent. Ordering, encouraging or even tolerating unethical acts by supervisees is a clear example of unethical management and social work practice. It also puts the manager and the organisation at risk of legal action in some jurisdictions. The legal concept of respondeat superior holds managers and their organisations responsible for unethical or harmful actions of staff members (Madden 2007). Supervisors are considered liable for the actions of their supervisees when it can be shown that supervision was lax or inadequate. Thus, managers must take an active role in overseeing compliance with ethical standards, both to avoid legal actions and, more importantly, to ensure that clients are not harmed by unethical practice. The example above also illustrates the means versus ends dimension of ethical reasoning. The supervisor and manager may have been motivated by concerns over child safety and the desire to protect the child from a neglectful situation. They therefore acted on the basis of "the end justifies the means". In doing so, they violated the provisions of social work ethical codes that require honesty and prohibit any type of deceit. A more appropriate approach is to consider ethical ends and means.

The decisions that managers make have implications for the organisation as a whole. Reamer (2000) distinguishes between act and rule utilitarianism in ethical decision making. The utilitarian approach evaluates ethical choices
based on the consequences of the decision. In act utilitarianism, the consequence of the choice is evaluated on the basis of whether it creates “good” outcomes for an individual or in one particular situation. The manager, however, must often consider rule utilitarianism, in which the choice that is made must be evaluated based on the assumption that the same choice will be made in all similar situations, thus creating a rule for the organisation. The direct care social worker is more likely to consider the consequences of an act for a specific client, while the manager – especially managers at higher levels of an organisation – must evaluate decisions based on analysis of the implications of the decision as generalised to agency practice.

**Climate creation**

Among the findings of the surveys on ethics conducted by the Ethics Resource Center was that those organisations that had a “culture of ethics” had far fewer ethical violations. “One critical finding of the 2005 NBES is the importance of an ethical culture in organisations, the informal and social system that sets norms for the employee behaviour that tells employees how things really work in that organization” (2007, Press release). Many leadership theories and principles in professional codes of ethics agree that the manager or leader is responsible for creating the conditions necessary for ethical reflection and decision making within the organisation. As noted earlier in the chapter, this is a key element of the greater responsibility of the manager, who must not only behave in an ethical manner, but must also ensure that ethical practice by others in the organisation is facilitated. It is interesting that climate creation is emphasised in many national social work codes of ethics. The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) Code says that managers should “work for the acceptance by employers of the values and principles and requirements of the Code, and to eliminate all factors within their control which prohibit or discourage employees’ adherence to the Code” (BASW 2002: para. 4.4.1). The NASW Code of Ethics states: “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” (NASW 1996: para. 3.07d). Similarly, the Australian code indicates that social work managers must introduce other administrators to the code and encourage its use; the Code of the Association of Social Workers in Turkey expresses a similar idea. The IFSW/IASSW Statement of Principles extends this responsibility to all social workers, who are to “work to create conditions in employing agencies and in their countries where the principles of this statement and those of their own national code (if applicable) are discussed, evaluated, and upheld” (IFSW 2004: 5.12). But climate creation goes beyond posting ethical rules or asking staff members to read the Code of Ethics (see below). It implies creating an atmosphere in which ethical dilemmas...
can be honestly and openly discussed and where colleagues can be consulted about difficult ethical decisions. Specific structures and tools such as ethics committees and audits may be useful, but the most important element is a climate of openness and integrity.

Managers can also enhance ethical practice within organisations by implementing structures and processes that assist staff members in their practice. Establishing agency-wide measures to protect client confidentiality, including sound procedures for storing records, protecting electronic communications, and arranging for an acceptable level of privacy for clients coming into the agency, are ways the manager can enhance client rights. Other policies can be designed to ensure that clients are truly well-informed about their rights and obligations as service users and understand the nature of giving consent.

Electronic technology has created new opportunities to protect clients, but also new opportunities to invade the privacy of clients and staff. A manager of a large agency serving clients with disabilities recently decided to put Global Positioning System (GPS) devices in each of the vans used to transport clients. This allows the central office to monitor the location of the vans at all times and to trace the routes driven. The decision may have been taken in response to a local case in which a driver left a severely disabled person alone in a van while she did her own personal errands. The disabled client became tangled in her car seat and sustained serious injuries. A GPS device would record any delays or deviations in scheduled routes. Thus, the device provides protection for clients, but may create an atmosphere of distrust among staff. In the same agency, a proposal to put video cameras in group home facilities is being resisted by staff members, who feel that their privacy and that of the clients would be invaded by being watched. Managers have to contend with complicated decisions in balancing uses of technology with traditional social work values of confidentiality, trust and privacy. Managerialism may lead to a preoccupation with risk avoidance without adequate consideration of other values.

*Moral alignment*

Moral alignment is another element of ethical culture. An agency that is in moral alignment is one in which staff experience fewer conflicts in ethical decision making. Moral alignment means that the agency’s practices and policies – including human resource policies – are consistent with the values and mission of the agency. Thus, there is a fit between the organisation’s mission and goals, the values underlying its services, and the way the agency is administered. The primary social work value of treating all people with dignity and respect should permeate social work organisations at all levels. Thus, an organisation is not ethically managed if staff members do not feel respected in their work, or if clients are dehumanised by the ways services are delivered. Moreover, specific policies should be consistent with agency
goals. Some examples of incongruence include: an organisation devoted to advocacy for improved and flexible working conditions for women workers did not allow its own staff to have flexible schedules or work part time; an agency emphasising good parenting did not allow its own staff time off to attend important parent-teacher conferences at their children's school; and so forth. Employees in agencies with such obvious incongruence between what they say they believe in and how they act will have a more challenging time with ethical decision making.

Sometimes, actions may be consistent with agency values and goals, but inconsistent with social work values. These situations pose special challenges, as the obligations of managers conflict. One recent example involved a conflict between the mission of a faith-based agency and its social work commitment to human rights.

Case example

This case example involves actions by administrators and staff of a local family service agency operated by a Catholic Diocese in the United States. The agency was located in a state where rights to civil unions for gays and lesbians were being debated in the state legislature. The proposal to establish civil unions was strongly and actively opposed by the Catholic Church. In response to a directive from the Diocese asking its agencies to participate in the active opposition to civil unions and gay marriage, the social work manager asked his staff, including social workers, to appear at the legislature to oppose the bill. Some did, standing outside the legislative office building with signs to oppose the equal rights bill under consideration. A gay social work student intern at the agency who went to the legislature to support the bill told of his feelings of rejection and isolation at seeing his fellow social workers standing in active opposition to his human rights.

Cases of ethical conflict involving religious values continue to pose particularly difficult challenges for social workers and social work managers. The actions taken by the social workers and their manager were clearly consistent with the values underlying the sponsoring Catholic agency. However, the actions were also almost certainly in conflict with the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics provisions that social workers should work to eliminate discrimination, and with the IFSW/IASSW Code that states that "social workers have a responsibility to challenge negative discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as ability, age…sexual orientation…” (IFSW: 4.2.1).

In accepting employment in a church-sponsored agency, social workers implicitly accept certain policies dictated by the church, in some instances, employees may be required to sign statements promising that their practice will not violate important church principles. Yet in the hierarchy of values suggested by Dolgoff, Loewenberg and Harrington (2005), equality is listed
Ethical Dilemmas in Social Work: International Perspective

as second in importance, preceded only by preservation of life. Adherence to agency rules, while present in earlier versions of the authors' hierarchy, does not appear on the list of the seven most important ethical principles for social workers. In the case cited above, the manager could have handled the dilemma in a more ethical way had he explained to his superiors that he could not ask staff to take actions that would directly conflict with their professional codes of ethics. In making his own decision whether to appear at the legislature, the manager would have to struggle with possible conflicts between personal, religious and professional values. He would also need to consider his leadership role in setting an example for staff members.

Cases of ethical conflict involving religious values continue to pose particularly difficult challenges for social workers and social work managers. They have arisen in many contexts, including orders to humanitarian agencies in Afghanistan to fire all female staff members in the 1990s, or conflicts over providing abortion information to clients in need. In many cases, the profession has struggled with the relative ethics of complying with directives that violate social work ethics or withdrawing from situations where people are in dire need of services. Perhaps easier to address are the ethical challenges that have arisen as a result of managerialism.

Managerialism

*Ethics in Social Work: Statement of Principles*, the international ethical document adopted by the IFSW and IASSW (2004), identifies areas of conflict typical in social work practice. Two are especially relevant for managers: “The conflict between duty of social workers to protect the interests of the people with whom they work and societal demands for efficiency and utility; and the fact that resources in society are limited” (IFSW 2004: Preface). These arenas of conflict are heightened by the encroachment of managerialist philosophy and practice in social services.

Managerialism has been extensively critiqued in the social work literature. But what is managerialism? Are its central tenets really inconsistent with social work ethics? Does managerialism foster a climate in which ethical practice is difficult or impossible? These questions will be briefly explored below.

Managerialism grew out of dissatisfaction with existing models of professional domination of the social services and the demand for fiscal austerity. In England, “existing modes of professional organizing were criticized for being inefficient, self-serving and failing to respond to the needs of clients” (Kirkpatrick 2006: 1). This three-pronged attack is interesting. Inefficiency is tied to resource waste, but the charges of being self-serving and failing to address client needs mix possible ethical failures by professionals with the politics of service reorganisation. Thus at the level of rhetoric, the drive toward managerialism was justified not only by the need to save money, but also by the
claim that client needs could be better met with more control over the efforts of professionals.

Vanstone draws a distinction between management and managerialism. While management is a “set of methods, skills, knowledge and values which can help the achievement of an organization's and individual's objectives,” managerialism is an “ideology of control” (1995: 126). Chu et al. define managerialism as a “technocratic micro-practice with an overwhelming focus on outcome” (2009: 294). Management techniques override other considerations. Thus, the managerialist manager is one “who thinks that most problems can be solved by rational-technical tools and mechanical use of flow charts, practice manuals, decision-making models” (Coulshed, cited by Vanstone 1995: 122). Management as science, emphasis on efficiency and cost saving, and limitations on professional discretion — indeed distrust towards professionals — are elements of the managerialist approach. Harris indicates that lessening the “power of welfare state professionals” (1998: 853) was an explicit aim of the managerialist approach, potentially putting social work managers in the position of contesting the influence of their own profession. In Britain, social workers became care managers and were expected to adopt a more business-like orientation and to engage in “scrupulous gate-keeping and strict rationing of scarce resources” (ibid.: 856).

Spread of managerialism

According to Tsui and Cheung, “the wind of managerialism is shaping the political and economic order of the world in the new century” (2004: 438). Aided by global market forces, what originated in the US and the UK has spread to most parts of the world. Leung (2002) documents the spread of managerialism to the social service sector in Hong Kong. As he explains, the government there decided to “enhance cost effectiveness and accountability in social service through the introduction of market values and business management techniques” such as “contract out, competitive bidding, performance monitoring and lump-sum grant.” Leung expresses concerns about the future of social services and NGOs and fears lessened quality of service. Throughout the developing world, managerialism has been spread by aid projects and international intergovernmental organisations, including the World Bank and United Nations:

Managerialism of a distinctly northern type — marked by concepts like accountability, transparency, participation and efficiency, as well as practices like double-entry bookkeeping, strategic planning, Logical Framework Analysis, project evaluation, and organizational self-assessment—has been shown to be pervasive in NGOs’ operations. Research has also shown how managerialism has transformed the form and day-to-day operations of even the smallest NGOs in the global south (Roberts et al. 2005: 1849).
This transfer is “emanating from bilateral donors, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for example, that have fully embraced major elements of managerialism” (ibid.).

**Critique of managerialism**

According to Harris, managerialism has taken root, at least in Britain. As he writes, “the proceduralization and commodification of the social work labour process...appear to be well under way” (1998: 858). Kirkpatrick (2006) is less convinced of the depth of the change in actual practice. However, he does report a lessening of professional ethos and rising tensions between managers and service providers. He cites a study that indicates “overt antagonism” between the new managerialism and the old culture of social work, and “deep rooted hostility to the central tenets of managerialism” by social work staff (ibid.: 10). Chu et al. (2009) argue that the technocratic emphasis of managerialism undermines the humanitarian and moral base of social work. “The re-emergence and growing dominance of conservatism, economic rationalism and managerialism have created an atmosphere that is not conducive to the authentic practice of social work” (ibid.: 294). They blame these trends on developments in dominant Western nations that spread to developing countries: “the therapeutic and new managerial developments in the USA and the UK, respectively, have led to the weakening of the moral and political grounds of the social work profession in many developed countries” (ibid.: 295).

Managerialism has taken a toll on staff morale in social work organisations. Social workers who provide direct services experience a value clash with the emphasis on cost cutting and measurement. Stress on service providers is increased by new accountability measures that require extensive forms, measures, and documentation. Workloads increase, but less time is devoted to meeting client need. In British social services, “there is now mounting evidence of rising levels of stress and demoralization in the social care workforce and to record levels of sickness and absenteeism” (Kirkpatrick, 2006: 13). The managerialist emphasis on production results in a less humanistic work environment, further diminishing satisfaction with work.

**Models of ethical management: Contesting managerialism**

Thus, in the view of many social workers, managerialism is incompatible with professional ethics. In this section, I argue that some degree of focus on outcomes and measurement is essential to ethical management practice, and that concern with efficiency is also needed. However, the managerial approach makes it difficult or impossible for social work managers to fulfil other ethical responsibilities. These include responsibility to advocate for adequate resources, responsibility for staff morale, and responsibility for social justice. Overall,
the package of approaches labelled managerialism needs to be replaced by alternate models of leadership more congruent with professional ethics.

Social workers often contest the managerial emphasis on efficiency. Efficiency is defined as achieving results or providing services at a determined standard of quality at the lowest possible cost. Efficiency is a necessary but insufficient and incomplete goal. Social work managers must be careful with resources, this is essential in both government and non-profit arenas and is demanded by public accountability. Therefore, managers must spend carefully and wisely and account for use of resources. Not to do so is unethical, as resources are scarce and wasted resources deprive vulnerable people of needed services. “Social workers should be diligent stewards of the resources of their employing organizations, wisely conserving funds where appropriate and never misappropriating funds or using them for unintended purposes” (NASW 1996: 3.09g), and managers should “use finances appropriately and account accurately” (Australian Association of Social Workers 2002: 4.4.2). However, efficiency is meaningless when not coupled with effectiveness. No service or intervention can be efficient if it is not effective and does not improve client well-being. Too often, efficiency in practice means only low costs. True efficiency is the capacity to provide services of the desired quality to the appropriate target population and achieve the desired results, and to do so at a reasonable, and perhaps the lowest possible, cost. Thus, while it can be argued that it is unethical to be wasteful of scarce resources, it is also unethical to focus on reducing costs over ensuring quality of care.

Managerialism’s focus on outcomes is positive when pursued in a balanced manner. Introduction of ways to define and measure outcomes in the social services has led to programme improvements in many arenas. Management tools such as logical framework techniques often lead to better planning and programs that are more likely to successfully address problems. As cited earlier, Vanstone indicated that management involves skills and knowledge that “can help the achievement of an organization’s …objectives” (1995: 126). Useful management tools should not be discarded over concerns with managerialism; instead, they should represent a component of the ethical imperative of competence. Such tools become damaging when the tool becomes more important than the needs of the service user and the human elements in the organisation.

Distributive justice

An excessive focus on cost cutting impairs the ability of social work managers to carry out their responsibility to pursue distributive justice. The NASW Code of Ethics states that “social work administrators should advocate within and outside their agencies for adequate resources to meet client needs (NASW 1996: para. 3.07). The BASW Code says that managers are to “promote equal-
ity policies and practices and advocate for resources to meet service users' needs” (BASW 2002: para. 4.4.1c). These ethical responsibilities are extremely difficult in a climate of neoliberalism and conservatism that values a minimal safety net of social services, imposes structural adjustment policies in developing countries and reduces the government's role in human well-being everywhere. In many places, securing adequate resources to meet client needs is impossible. Instead, managers are evaluated on their success in carrying out policies that reduce services, cut off benefits to still needy clients, or introduce abbreviated and untested service models. The managerialist emphasis on lowest cost and less eligibility are indeed incompatible with social work ethics.

Managing staff in a managerialist environment

Managerialism often has deleterious effect on management-staff relations in social work, as mentioned earlier in the chapter. The following case illustrates how pressures to cut costs influenced a management decision that had serious effects on staff and quite possibly on the clients served by the agency. It provides a concrete example of elements of managerialism in practice.

Case example

This case example took place in a multi-service agency in the United States. The agency was funded by grants and contracts and by payments from health insurance plans for mental health counselling visits. The agency director discovered that the agency was losing money, primarily in the mental health service. The reason for the losses was "no show" clients: approximately 30% of scheduled appointments for mental health counselling were not kept. Clients rarely cancelled, they just failed to come to their counselling sessions. The insurance company only reimbursed the agency for completed appointments. Therefore, in effect, 30% of the time, the clinical social workers were being paid by the agency and not providing client services. The Executive Director, with the approval of the Board, decided to change the terms of employment of the mental health social workers. Rather than continuing as employees of the agency, their jobs were changed to contract positions. The social workers who agreed to continue became private contractors, paid by the session only for counselling sessions actually held. Contract positions pay workers on the basis of output and do not include any benefits; workers must secure their own health insurance and do not receive sick leave or vacation pay or pension plans. After a year under this arrangement, the mental health service was no longer losing money. The "no show" rate for clients was reduced to 5%. It appeared that when clinicians are only paid if the client comes for treatment, they invest more effort in encouraging and reminding clients of their appointments and assisting with barriers that may prevent client attendance.
This case demonstrates a managerial approach. It also illustrates the ethical problem areas identified in the IFSW/IASSW principles – the conflict between duty to serve and demands for efficiency and the resource limitations that constrain decisions. It appears that the manager was primarily motivated by concern with costs and budget. The decision to move to contracting out is fairly drastic. Could other strategies have worked to improve client attendance? Were there obstacles in the way agency work was organised that encouraged “no shows”? Certainly for the staff the change was severe and mostly negative and led to loss of income security and a lessened identification with the organisation. The impact on clients cannot be accurately assessed. On the one hand, clients should benefit from receiving more consistent treatment. However, the system may push social workers to avoid taking on difficult multi-problem clients who are less likely to attend their appointments regularly. Contract employees may also be less likely to spend time on collateral work, receive little or no staff development, and may receive less supervision. The arrangement seems inconsistent with the ethical responsibilities of managers to provide acceptable working conditions and to obtain adequate staffing, supervision and staff development for staff (Australian Association of Social Workers: 4. 4. 2). The management decision resulted in what Vanstone called “less shared commitment to the goals of organizations” (1995: 121). A social work manager should try to balance the need for agency funding, the well-being of staff members, the need to provide quality client services and the overall organisational climate in making critical decisions. Involving affected staff in generating alternatives and collaborative problem solving should be attempted whenever possible. Selecting a more participative management style is one way to contest managerialism.

Ethical styles of management and leadership

Northouse identified ethical leadership as leadership that “respects others, serves others, shows justice, manifests honesty, and builds community” (2007: 350). The manager in the previous case failed to demonstrate these qualities. Leadership styles that emphasise intimidation, rigid rules, and lack of trust are not compatible with social work values. Such negative styles are based on mechanistic views of workers and organisational life. Styles more consistent with ethical leadership encourage common vision, participation by staff, respect for all members of the organisation and recognition of the staff’s family responsibilities, while ensuring services are provided and good service standards maintained. Among the principles stated in the IFSW/IASSW ethical document are strengths-based approaches, participation, competence, integrity, accountability, and compassion. These can be incorporated into social work management.
Conclusion: Can ethical management challenge the encroachment of managerialism?

Littlechild (2003/2004) called for more emphasis on values and ethics in social work as a way to respond to the encroachment of managerialism. The challenges posed by managerialism require at least a three-pronged approach. Social work managers cannot ignore the pressures for efficiency, but they can contest the hollow definition of efficiency as no more than cheap or denied services. They can begin by achieving competence in those management skills and tools that enhance services, including skills in measuring and accounting for service effectiveness. Secondly, social work managers can adopt leadership styles and practices that are consistent with social work values and allow them to lead their agencies and programmes with humanism and respect for all participants. Finally, social work managers can emphasise ways to build and strengthen an ethical culture in their organisations. Studies continue to find that “a strong ethical culture – fostered by senior management and supervisor reinforcement” reduces ethical lapses among staff (Rion 2009). The recent study of ethics in non-profit organisations indicated that organisations with “a strong ethical culture can virtually eliminate pressure to compromise ethics standards” and greatly reduce the risk of ethical failures (ERC 2008: IX). While there are tools for strengthening attention to ethics, such as ethics committees and audits (Reamer 2001, see also CANPO 1994), research suggests that managers can best strengthen ethical culture through modelling ethical behaviour, demonstrating integrity and honesty in commitments made, and supporting staff and others in maintaining high ethical standards (Seligson and Choi 2006). Issuing rules and statements is considerably less effective.

Thus, social work managers must be ethically and morally active. Chu et al. write that “social workers cannot be technocrats, they must be moral actors” (2009: 290). This is equally true for social work managers. While they must be technically competent, their roles in creating humane and ethically sensitive organisations are critical. “The ideology of managerialism, which has permeated public service organizations during the 1980s, has obscured their central purposes of helping those in need and contributing to the reduction of community problems. A proper concern with the ethics of management provides the best chance of re-establishing the primacy of those purposes” (Vanstone 1995: 133).
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