

Chapter 3

Clients

Introduction

1. Intervention and self-determination
 - a. A difficulty with understanding the client
 - b. When self-determination is possible
 - c. Problems with these criteria
 - d. Choosing harm
 - e. Impaired self-determination
2. Conflicts with self-determination
3. Relations with clients
 - a. Dual relationships
 - b. Further kinds of dual relationships
 - c. Conflicts of interest
 - d. The obligation to serve a client competently
 - e. Reciprocity and obligations in a professional relationship
 - f. Drawing boundaries
 - g. Virtues
 - h. 'Recalcitrant' clients
4. Who is the client?
 - Introduction
 - a. Choosing one's client
 - b. No choice
 - c. The family as client
 - d. Diversity among clients

Questions

Questions

- (1) Provide an example, out of your own experience, of you or someone else having done something that was less than voluntary. Less than fully informed? Less than fully competent?
- (2) In 1.2 *Dancing a legal dance*, compare Mary's explanation for why Martha was running away from home with the alternative we provided. Do any of the differences turn upon a judgment that Mary is uninformed about something, or acting involuntarily in some way, or is incompetent in some regard? Remember in answering this question the first step in the method of tracking harms. Did Mary try to understand why Martha was running away from home?

- (3) In 1.4 *Doing what the judge orders*, was John fully informed when he decided to go to his supervisor to get Al tested? If he was not, what more did he need to know, or did he know enough even if he was not fully informed? If he was fully informed, was he acting voluntarily or was he in some way coerced by, say, Al's mother threatening her social worker if Al found out she was HIV-positive?
- (4) What is wrong with lying? Suppose no one ever finds out: what is wrong with it then, if anything? Suppose it does some good for the person to whom you are lying: what is wrong with it then, if anything? Are there circumstances in which it may be ethical to lie? Give reasons for your answer, one way or the other.
- (5) By telling the wife that in order for the husband and wife to be in a mutually respectful marriage, he would tell the husband if she does not, Mohammed would be encouraging self-determination by denying it. Discuss whether that is always wrong.
- (6) Give two examples of how self-determination conflicts with other social work values besides those used as examples in this section. Examine each conflict and assess how it is to be resolved ethically.
- (7) What are some obligations social workers owe to their clients? Give four and provide examples of each drawn from the cases we have examined and your own cases.
- (8) A client someone might think recalcitrant may be exercising self-determination. All the issues that arise regarding clients who do what others may consider signs or even proof of lack of self-determination -- as, for instance, Dorothy in 3.2 *Depressed and ready to die* -- arise regarding so-called recalcitrant clients. Give an example from your own experience of someone you thought recalcitrant and explain why you found them recalcitrant. Were they incompetent? Ill-informed? Acting involuntarily? What would need to be true about them for them to be exercising self-determination but making a decision you would not have made? (You should apply the first step in the method here.)
- (9) Pick one of the virtues of social workers and explain what it requires a social worker to do regarding clients and colleagues.
- (10) Drawing boundaries is difficult in any relationship. Give an example of a problem you have had with a friend or relation regarding boundaries. Discuss the pros and cons of how the problem was settled or ought to have been settled.
- (11) What interests are in conflict in 3.5 *Friends and professional relations*? Whose interests are they? What could be done to prevent the conflict? Would it be enough for Paul simply to follow the Code and inform Mark of the potential conflict? If so, why? If not, why not and what else should Paul -- or Mark -- do?
- (12) Deciding to provide 'a foster home for the entire family,' as Carrie says in 3.14 *Caring for the family*, would require significant changes in existing policy. Discuss the pros and cons of making such a change. In doing this you should consider whether it is always good to keep a family together, whether concentrating upon a family may mean losing sight of individuals, and so on.

- (13) We sometimes come to have information we would have preferred not to have. That was Tamara's situation in 3.12 *Automatic assignments*. Look back over previous cases we have examined and pick one where the social worker also is privy to information that creates ethical problems. Discuss.
- (14) Having more than one client in a single case can create problems because the clients' interests may compete with one another. This sort of situation is not unusual, however. Every parent with more than one child faces this kind of problem regularly. Give an example from your own experience of where you have had responsibility for two or more individuals whose interests have competed. Consider how one is to settle such matters in a way that causes the least harm.