

Analyzing and Confronting Managerial Impediments to the Pursuit of Social Justice by Human Service Agencies

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Abstract

Mismanagement and unethical behavior are addressed in this article through the presentation of three fact-based cases written by the author to be used in undergraduate or graduate college classes in sociology, social work or human services that cover such topics as management, probation, homeless shelters and generalist social work agencies. The actions of human service staffers and management are supposed to be professionally constrained by the NASW Code of Ethics. How should a social worker respond when he/she sees a conflict that involves ethical dilemmas with colleagues, community members and clients? There are rarely easy consequence-free decisions. Each case in this paper offers sociologically framed questions that should guide students to explore their own values as they develop a “sociological eye” and train for case work and community advocacy, the dual identity of contemporary social work.

Keywords: Case method, Homeless shelters, Probation, NASW code of ethics, Generalist social work practice, Ethical egoism, Management

1. Introduction

The interaction between ethical egoism (Vaughn 2008) and social institutions has long been the subject of philosophy (Hobbes 1957, [1651]; Smith 2007, [1776]), sociology (Berger 1963; Callero 2013; Collins 1989; Durkheim 1933, [1912]) and social work (Farmer 2014; Hachen 2001). Exploring this interaction is essential for understanding the challenges faced by social workers because they have to deal with the complicated fallout and consequences of self-interested behavior when that behavior affects the less powerful and disenfranchised populations. There is certainly nothing wrong with acting out of self-interest. It is advocated for self-preservation, economic gain (Smith 2007, [1776]), solutions for societal needs (Funk 2000), political endeavors (Monroe 1991) and much more. Some may confuse this with utilitarianism (Bentham 1879, [1789]), but as Vaughn (2008) points out, the moral focus of utilitarianism and ethical egoism is different. The utilitarianism of the social worker is usually pointing towards the altruistic promotion of “good” for everyone and that everyone counts equally. The point of ethical egoism is usually the promotion of one’s own “good.” In the following scenarios, social work managers exhibit self-interested behavior that has negative consequences. Addressing the negative effects of ethical egoism is the purpose of this paper. The method used is case analysis through the “sociological eye” (Collins 1998).

Research into of the history, value and advantages of using the case method in classroom teaching (Farmer 2014; Fauri, Wernet and Netting 2000; Hachen 2001) reflects the enthusiasm of this pedagogy in social work and human service programs. The cases that follow can help students integrate theory and practice as they apply concepts they have learned, especially when placing students in fieldwork sites is impractical or impossible. The case method allows students to clarify their personal values and motivations for pursuing a career in the human services field, and it teaches them to be analytical and think flexibly as they come up with possible interventions. In keeping with the dual identity of current social work practice that focuses on both case work and community advocacy work, the following three cases involve situations with diverse and multicultural populations.

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Most recently, Blackmon (2019) and Cournoyer (2017) have reiterated the importance of social workers being capable of interacting with populations whose diversity and neighborhoods are different than what they are used to. These areas of diversity include, but are not limited to, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, social class and age.

2. The Cases

Case 1: A Juvenile Probation Officer's Dilemma

Probation and police officers spend much of their time performing duties that closely relate to social case work and advocacy. Unfortunately for probation officers, their supervisor or the managers above them in the bureaucracy are often political appointees who sometimes do not want to challenge the system. In this case a probation officer was trained in sociology, criminal justice and social work and brings those skills and that attitude to her job. As she learned during her education, there is always an interplay between micro, mezzo and macro forces. She is faced with the possibility that the local police have been lying in court and that her parolees are the victims. This problem is not new. The issues of police lying and how it relates to witness credibility and discrimination has been well researched by Goffman (1959: 58-66), Goldstein (2017); Hunt and Manning (1991); Moran (2018) and Taslitz (2003). Moran (2018), especially, has criticized the ways the criminal justice system venerates law enforcement and represses minorities and states, "Defendants should not be condemned to lose at trial simply because the key witness against them is a police officer" (1396).

Claire Hunt (27) is an African American juvenile probation officer. She is responsible for conducting investigations, providing supervision, case management and rehabilitative services to youth adjudicated under state law as delinquent or as children in need of services (CHINS). She is employed by the state and works under the Bureau of Juvenile Justice (BJJ) which is organizationally under the Division of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) which is under the State Department of Health and Human Services (SDHHS). She has a BJJ supervisor who reports to another administrator in DCYF.

Claire obtained her BA in criminal justice and sociology and went on to get her MSW. She fully believes in the social work creed of fighting for social justice and advocating for the disadvantaged and vulnerable members of our society. In her role as a probation officer, she was beginning to suspect she had a problem. Four of her probationers had repeatedly told her that the two police officers who had arrested them had lied in court about what happened in their cases. Their claim was that the officers gave both misleading and false information while under oath. This was not all four youth talking to Claire at the same time. Each child had complained to her separately over the past several months. Their cases were different. The two officers were the same.

The first case was Peter F. (15-year-old Hispanic from a single-parent family with five siblings, one older and the others younger). Peter said he was in the Williams Machine factory on Liberty Street late one night. The back door was open. He went in to smoke cigarettes with his girlfriend and have some wine that his older brother had given him. They heard someone coming and the girlfriend ran out. She tripped over a computer cord and the computer fell on the floor. Peter was slower because he was trying to hide the wine and put the computer back on the desk. The cops came in and arrested him for breaking and entering and attempted burglary. When they got to court, both officers, backing each other up, testified that they had heard a noise in the factory and smelled marijuana. They saw someone in the distance leaning over something on the floor. When they came up to the youth they saw a boy holding a computer, obviously trying to steal it. Peter's lawyer prepared him on how he should act and what he should say in court, but Peter was loud and incredulous that the cops were lying. The judge believed the officers and put Peter on probation for one year.

Helen O. (14-year-old white, only child, who lives at home with her divorced mother). According to Helen, she and her boyfriend were in Walmart picking out a toy for her cat. Her boyfriend was holding one toy while she looked for one that was a different color. They couldn't decide which one they wanted, so they went to the cat food section and picked up the cat's favorite mix. They still had both toys. Just then a school friend walked up and asked why Helen was not at school that day and then asked her about a Star Wars T-shirt she (the friend) was holding. Helen said the T-shirt looked great and the three of them went to the checkout. The friend paid for the T-shirt. Helen's boyfriend had put his cat toy on some shelf, but Helen forgot and walked out with hers. This was all caught on CCTV. The store detective immediately called the cops so Helen couldn't leave the premises. The cops were already in the parking lot at the time and saw Helen walk out of the store. When they stopped her she started to yell, scream and flay them with obscenities.

They arrested her on the spot for shoplifting. In court the officers claimed they knew Helen from previous run-ins on the street. Despite her lawyer's defensive efforts, Helen couldn't claim to have not shoplifted in this case because it was on video, but the cops made matters worse by testifying that Helen had resisted arrest, and was a habitual school truant, drug user and liar. The judge put Helen on probation.

Hu L. (16-year-old Chinese-American girl from a small family). Her story is that during a family dinner her uncle had slapped her in the mouth because she wouldn't tell him why she had gotten a tattoo on her lower back. She was running through a playground to get away from her angry uncle. He wanted her to stop so he could punish her more, but she kept running. Unfortunately for her, two cops were sitting in their patrol car and observed both she and the man after her. They stopped the girl and the man. The man identified himself as the uncle and said he just wanted to see if she was OK because she ran out in the middle of dinner. They checked this with the girl and she shyly agreed. After getting their names and home address, the cops let them both go. Later that night the cops show up at the family apartment to arrest the girl. In court they said that when they returned to the station a call had come in complaining that a Chinese girl had been seen running from a fatal stabbing in the playground. They believed Hu fit the description. At the apartment they noticed Hu's swollen mouth. They arrested her for leaving a crime scene and although she pleaded not guilty, she received home probation from the judge.

Alex N. (16-year-old Crips gang member and brother of 21-year-old Nick, also Crip and who had served five years for armed robbery). Alex told Claire he was just hanging with his buddies on Huston Street when members of the rival Bloods attacked them with knives and bats. Alex also believed some of the Bloods were packing guns. A fight that lasted about fifteen minutes left one of Alex's friends seriously wounded. The two cops arrived, but Alex ran home, told Nick what happened, and begged Nick to help him take revenge against the Bloods. Nick told him to learn to fight his own battles and that he shouldn't have been on Huston Street anyway. Later that night Alex and two other Crips found and seriously stabbed a Blood who was pumping gas. Alex said he wasn't the one who stabbed the Blood, but the cops didn't believe him. In court, the cops testified that they had seen most of the incident and that Alex was the only Crip standing there over the prone body when they arrived. Alex did not deny that lie because he didn't want to rat on his friends. The judge gave Alex 11 months in a juvenile lockdown facility for attempted murder.

Claire had been pondering these stories about the two cops. She suspected there could be a culture of police lying if it helps get a conviction. She had read that police often construct stories to obtain probable cause. She learned in one of her criminal justice classes that cops learn to lie from the senior officers and that they learn how to justify their stories. They are rewarded for doing this by getting convictions and gaining public respect for cleaning up high-crime neighborhoods. They also back up each other's stories. Of course, if they were caught lying they could be punished and condemned by the courts and the public.

Claire went to her immediate supervisor, Nick Romano (54 years old with a BA in Criminal Justice and a MSW), and asked if and how she should proceed with this situation. He strongly suggested that she NOT pursue the issue. He said the Police Chief who supervises the officers in question was a respected 20-year veteran in the force. Romano believed that if the officers were doing anything wrong then the Chief would know and would have dealt with it. Romano also said he was confident that his (Romano's) DCYF supervisor (a former police officer and political appointee) would agree with him because the DCYF supervisor knew the juvenile court judge and found him to be fair and honest. Romano told Claire, however, that if she wanted to pursue the issue then he had a few suggestions. First, she should talk to the two police officers. Secondly, she could talk to the judge. Thirdly, she could suggest that one or more of the juveniles' parents could file a law suit.

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify and explain any "ethical egoism" in this case.
2. Who is telling the truth in these juvenile stories?
3. Which of the social worker roles (advocate, teacher, and counselor) does Claire need to adopt here? Why?
4. Do these roles conflict with her job as a probation officer? How?
5. Which of the NASW codes of ethics apply here?
6. Do police ever lie? Should they ever lie? When? Why?
7. What are some structural explanations for police lying?
8. Do you see evidence of discrimination in any of these cases? Where?

9. If you assume the police have lied in these cases, who/what from the following list would hold the most responsibility? (A) a police culture, (B) each cop, (C) the youth, (D) the judge, (E) the local politicians, (F) the city residents who vote, (G) the more senior cops on the force, (H) the police academy the cops graduated from, (I) the capitalist system, (J) the criminal justice system.
10. Where is the injustice in this case?
11. To use the “sociological eye” (Collins 1998), you need to look at social connections. They are forms of social organization that shape interactions and human action. What social connections do you see in this case?
12. Who is being exploited in this case? By whom? Why?
13. What do you think of Supervisor Romano’s suggestions? Would they work? Why?
14. What CJ/legal reforms and degree of political will are necessary to reform the imbalance that prejudices defendants as they attempt to contest the credibility of cops on the witness stand? NOTE: refer to Moran (2018).

Case 2: Trouble at Betty’s Homeless Shelter

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that the number of homeless people in the United States is about 600,000. These folks can be found living in train stations, bus stations, airports and building lobbies. They can be seen on sidewalks, parks, under bridges and in encampments of makeshift homes. The many factors contributing to homelessness include a lack of affordable housing (Dattalo 1991), a lack of access to living wage jobs or quality education or affordable health care, or racial and gender discrimination. Most of these are due to flaws in our social structure and out of a person’s control (Goldstone 2019; McLaughlin, Casey & McMahan 2019; Waegemakers Schiff & Schiff 2014). The homeless problem has reached crisis proportions (Foscarinis 2019; Henry, Shivji, de Sousa, & Cohen 2015). One temporary solution is homeless shelters for which requests have increased more than thirty percent over the past two decades. This case is about one of those shelters, but it is in trouble. Management seems to be the problem that needs to be addressed.

Betty’s Place provides safe, dignified temporary dormitory-style housing for 40 women (no children) at a time and serves hundreds of women each year. It is not only a homeless shelter, but it distributes clothes, manages a food pantry, runs classes and cooks hot meals. Betty’s is located in a large brick building on a busy side street in a middle-sized city and has a barely visible “Betty’s Place” sign on the door. It is named after Betty Callahan, the founder, who died 15 years ago. It is a 501 (C)(3) private, nonprofit organization that receives no government funding and relies entirely on volunteers and monetary and in-kind donations. It has a Board of Directors that includes a lawyer, a university professor, a physician, a computer programmer, a banker and three local small business owners. All of the Directors are women. There are four paid staff.

The house manager is Robin Carey who has her MSW and has been with Betty’s for 10 years. She reports directly to the Board of Directors and is responsible for the budget, fund raising, community relations and establishing and maintaining connections with support agencies (hospitals, colleges, high schools, social clubs like Rotary or Lion’s Club, job training programs, etc.). She also supervises the three associate managers. Debbie Hadaway (BA in human services) is the associate manager who recruits, trains, schedules and supervises class teachers and other program volunteers. There are 15-20 volunteers for each of the three meal shifts. They not only feed the shelter residents, but 30-40 walk-in women each day. They are not a soup kitchen, however. The volunteers prepare and serve food, clean the cafeteria, wash dishes, distribute clothes and other donated items.

Jean Longworth (BA in human services) is the associate manager who runs the food pantry, solicits donations including food, clothes, books, sheets, towels, furniture, cleaning supplies and nonprescription drugs. Kristen Rias (BS in psychology), the third associate manager, selects and supervises the shelter residents. This includes ensuring that house rules are followed, providing crisis counseling, and making referrals for the women who need job training, medical attention or transportation. Her job also involves distributing mail (women are allowed to use Betty’s as their temporary legal residence), and helping the shelter women find affordable housing when their residency term expires.

By reputation, Betty’s is clean, friendly and compassionate. There are 11 rules at Betty’s Place: (1) There is no discrimination, (2) New residents are selected by lottery each day, (3) The number of residents cannot exceed 40, (4) No drugs, alcohol or smoking is allowed, (4) Residents can only stay for 30 days, (5) Residents can return to Betty’s, but only after they have been away for 30 days, go through the lottery again and have proof of trying to find a job and permanent housing. (6) Residents must keep their bed area clean and neat, (7) No disruptive behavior,

(8) Must be in the shelter by 9:30 PM, (9) No men are allowed in the resident living areas, (10) No pets and (11) Daily attendance at Christian service is required.

For the most part, the residents obey the rules because they are grateful for the opportunity to be here. Minor problems arise once in a while, like cleaning or coming in a few minutes past 9:30 PM, but a warning usually is enough to prevent a reoccurrence. Recently, however, the problems have multiplied and some, if not all, of the following complaints relate to management.

Complaints

1. Volunteers have been taking home items that were donated to the shelter.
2. The volunteers who serve the food have been denying “seconds” that used to be allowed.
3. One day a volunteer who managed the lottery asked the two lottery winners (both Hispanic) what their names were and then told them that there were no beds. The volunteer told them this with no emotion or compassion.
4. One resident claimed that associate manager Rais made her wait over an hour to get her mail even though the resident could see it on the manager’s desk when she asked for her mail.
5. Two volunteers complained that several residents were hitting them up for money.
6. One resident believed she should not have been “kicked out” simply because she smoked pot in the TV area.
7. Four volunteers complained that there were not enough volunteers to handle the number of walk-ins during Thanksgiving.
8. The physician on the Board threatened to push for the house manager’s resignation if she didn’t raise the amount of financial donations by at least \$50,000 in six months.
9. One of the small business owners on the Board did not like the rumor she heard that the shelter had taken in a transgendered person.
10. The local Legal Aid Society complained that they were receiving too many requests for legal work like restraining orders and divorce work or child custody issues.
11. The Legal Aid lawyers also complained that the cafeteria, where they consulted with their clients, was too loud, because that is where the residents could entertain their visiting children or friends.
12. The professor on the Board complained that students she had referred for internships were not getting anything meaningful to do and were not learning anything.
13. A person wanting to donate food and clothing claimed he was given erroneous donation times and directions to Betty’s by the volunteer who answered the phone.
14. At least five residents who had left the shelter claimed the affordable housing information given to them by associate manager Rias was inaccurate and out-of-date.
15. One resident was complaining that management was forcing her to attend the church services.

The staff did not like hearing these complaints. When house manager Carey held a management meeting to discuss the problems, the three associate managers pointed to her lack of availability as the cause and claimed she wasn’t interested in what they did. When the manager asked the associates about their specific jobs, they each responded that they were performing their job as best they could. If there were problems with the volunteers, for example, Jean Longworth said that was Debbie Hadaway’s responsibility, not hers. The meeting terminated with all four of them blaming each other.

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify and explain the “ethical egoism” at Betty’s Homeless Shelter.
2. What seems to be the major problem here? What should happen now?
3. As you look at the social actors in this case, how are they affected by the larger contexts in which they are acting?
4. Do you see any exploitation and misuse of power in this case? Explain.
5. How is this agency (social system) out of balance?
6. How should the complaints be handled? Who should handle them?
7. Which of the three associate managers has the most difficult job? Explain.
8. What are the chances that Betty’s Place can return to the well-run and respected place it once was?
9. Why are temporary shelters like this necessary? Do they do more harm than good? Do they detract from solving the bigger structural issues? How so?
10. What are the obstacles to getting more affordable housing in needy areas? (Note: Refer to Henry et al 2015)
11. What are the obstacles to obtaining more affordable health care? (Note: Refer to Waegemakers et al 2014)

- 12. Do you see any discrimination in this case? If so, where?
- 13. Which of the NASW Code of Ethics are broken in this case?
- 14. How is working with volunteers different than working with paid staff?

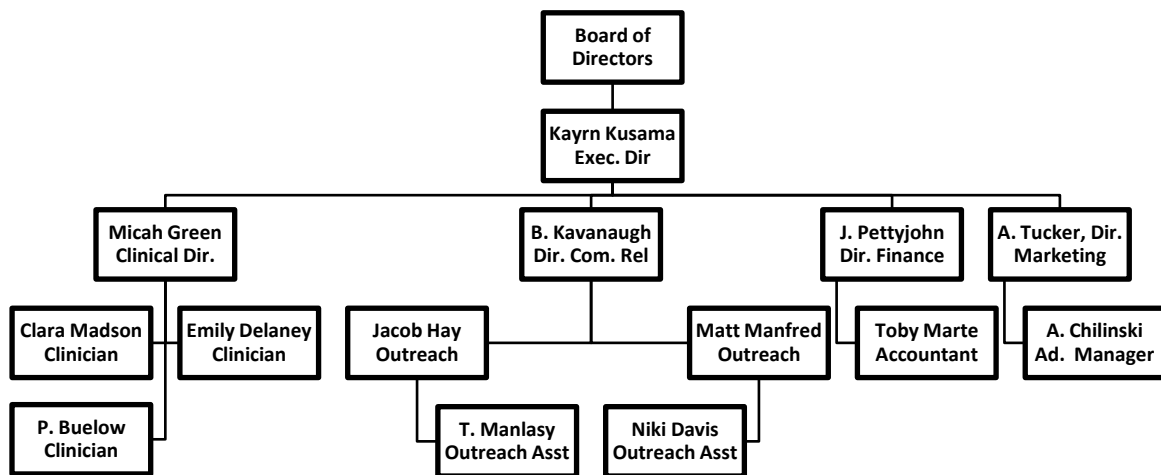
Case3: A Management Nightmare at Eliot Social Services

The actions of human service staffers and management are professionally constrained by the NASW Code of Ethics even though they may intersect with their personal ethics. How should a social worker respond when he/she sees a conflict that involves ethical dilemmas with colleagues, community members and clients? There are rarely no easy, consequence-free decisions, especially when an overarching organizational climate exists that mandates a certain management philosophy and style.

The Eliot Social Services Agency is a private, non-profit 501 (C)(3) organization in a sprawling metropolis. They specialize in generalist social work that includes clinical work with individuals and families and mezzo work with groups and neighborhoods. The ESSA has an annual budget of \$2 million that includes a \$800,000 grant from the United Way and \$1,200,000 from individual and corporate donations. What is unique about the ESSA is that their founding Board of Directors crafted their charter and bylaws to require the use of participative management. This means that the employees may participate in setting agency goals, making decisions (choosing from alternative courses of action), solving problems (including defining the issues) and making changes in the organization. Of course, these four areas are not mutually exclusive. This type of management structure, if implemented properly, has long been shown in organizational research to improve individual performance, productivity and job satisfaction (i.e., Chacar & Suryekar 2009; Farmer 2012; Hennestad 2000; Klein 1984). In the social work field, the outcome of this management model should be the improved delivery and quality of service to the marginalized and disenfranchised populations. Should the model be poorly implemented, the results could be a disaster (Farmer 2012; Kanter 1986).

As can be seen in the ESSA organization chart, there are 14 paid employees.

Organization Chart for Eliot Social Services Agency (ESSA)



The ESSA shuts down public business at 3 PM on the last Friday of every month to hold a mandatory all-staff meeting to raise and discuss issues that have arisen since the last meeting. Kayrn Kusama, the Executive Director, runs these meetings. She is the newest of all the employees having only been hired six months ago by the Board of Directors to replace the former Executive Director who the Board let go for insubordination and unethical behavior. It should be noted that during the week between these meetings each staff member pretty much operates with autonomy so that the flow of business is not interrupted. The staff is usually quite satisfied with this freedom of operation. Because so many issues had been identified at the last Friday meeting that needed thought and further discussion, Kusama adjourned the meeting until 7 AM the next Monday morning. The following meeting minutes reveal what came up at the last Friday meeting. Unfortunately, the work environment was very tense on the Monday after that meeting.

Minutes of Last Friday's Essa Staff Meeting

1. The meeting was called to order by Ex. Dir. Kayrn Kusama (MSW).
2. The minutes of the previous meeting were distributed, discussed and approved.
3. Kusama opened the meeting for the identification of new issues.
4. Clinician Madison (MSW) asked if the rumor were true that Clinician Delaney (MSW) had loaned \$100 to her (Delaney's) client. Delaney said it was true. It was deemed an emergency and she expected to get the \$100 back.
5. Director of Financing Pettyjohn (MBA) asked Ex. Dir. Kusama to explain why she approved the payment of \$3,000 to a local computer repair store when the owner of that store was on the ESSA Board of Directors. Kusama said she did nothing wrong. It was the only local store with the expertise they needed.
6. Clinician Buelow (MSW) wondered why Clinician Madison broke the confidentiality of her (Madison's) client who admitted to having suicidal thoughts. Madison explained that it was her duty to save the client's life. Clinical Director Micah Green (PhD in psychology) agreed with Madison.
7. Director of Community Relations Kavanaugh-Jones (MSW) reported that when Outreach Worker Matt Manfred (BA in human services) was housebound because of a blizzard he updated his notes on his computer and included a selfie of him sitting at his computer and included the caption, "I'm so dedicated that I'm working at home." He put this on his Facebook page and sent it to a friend who enlarged the caption and could read the details of the client's records in the background. The friend knew the client and told the client who then called Kavanaugh-Jones.
8. Advertising Manager Chilinski (BS in marketing) wondered why Director of Marketing Tucker (MBA) was pushing to advertise an agency service that ESSA was not qualified to provide.
9. Accountant Toby Marte (BS in accounting) reported that when he attended his first AA meeting he heard another AA member talking about having an affair with her Outreach Worker, Jacob Hay (BA in human services). Marte thought this relationship, if true, was unethical.
10. Outreach Worker Tatiana Manlasy (BS in psychology) wondered how she should deal with a social worker from a juvenile drug treatment home who wanted to pay her privately to refer a client to them.
11. Outreach Assistant Niki David (BA in English) was absent.

NOTE: Academic degrees and major, not part of the minutes, are included for additional personal/social information.

Around the conference table at 7 AM Monday morning before Executive Director Kusama arrived, folks were drinking coffee, mumbling about last Friday and complaining of the inconvenience of this specially called early meeting. Alfia Chilinski was telling Micah Green that she had to pay a neighbor to put her two young kids on the school bus. Micah was sympathetic. Tatiana Manlasy said she was missing an important community organization meeting that had been organized by the Council of Ministers two weeks ago. Matt Manfred was telling Kavanaugh-Jones that he should not have brought up the Facebook issue at Friday's meeting. Niki Davis was telling Toby Marte that she was looking for another job someplace less stressful. James Pettyjohn told everyone that he was supposed to be preparing for a meeting with the Director of the United Way to get their grant increased. Clara Madison was pissed at Buelow for bringing up the confidentiality issue. Brian Kavanaugh-Jones was asserting that this was all Kusama's fault. Just then Kusama entered the room, said "good morning," and without another word sat at the head of the conference table and called the meeting to order.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where is the ethical egoism at ESSA?
2. What are the social conflicts you see in this case?
3. Do you agree that Kusama was right to carry the Friday meeting over to Monday? Explain.
4. Identify and discuss any ethical problems (relate to NASW Code of Ethics) you see in the issues listed in the meeting minutes.
5. Is there any injustice here? Explain
6. Was there a better way for the folks involved to handle the issues? Explain.
7. Does the ESSA seem to be following the participative management model? Explain.

8. Using a systems (structural-functionalism) approach to this case, identify the inputs, throughputs and outputs (expected and realized if any).
9. Are the goals of the participative management model being met at ESSA? Explain.
10. Are the four components (clinical, community relations, financing and marketing) of the agency (social system) in balance as an organizational team? Why or why not?
11. How should Executive Director Kusama run the Monday morning meeting? What should she say?
12. What additional information would have been helpful in answering the questions for this case?
13. Executive Director Kusama has to submit a brief monthly summary of ESSA activities to the Board of Directors. What should she report?
14. If you were a Board member, what changes would you make to this organization to improve the delivery of services to the vulnerable population?

3. Conclusions

One would like to think that the practitioners in the altruistic field of social work and human services would be free of the negative type of self-interested behavior, “ethical egoism,” that leaves victims in its wake. But each of the three fact-based cases presented here leave little doubt that individuals, families and communities can feel the consequences of such behavior. When these victims are the poor, the vulnerable, the oppressed, the powerless and the disenfranchised (the focus of the social work mission) then it is an unacceptable and sorry tale. The social worker’s primary mission is to enhance wellbeing and promote social justice. It should be above the social worker’s self-interest. The NASW Code of Ethics calls for social worker integrity, competence and devotion to the solving of social problems. Social workers need to understand the importance of social relationships and social justice for all. These are the core values and ethical principles of the profession.

In the “A Juvenile Probation Officer’s Dilemma” case, Claire Hunt was motivated to advocate for her probationers who claimed the local police had been lying in court to get convictions. When she went to her supervisor for guidance as to how to address the problem he strongly suggested she not pursue the issue. Whose interests was he protecting? Was he committed, as she was, to social justice and the dignity of her clients? Were the residents in Betty’s Homeless Shelter discriminated against and denied their rightful services because of staff bickering, poor communication, incompetence and poor management by the Board of Directors and House Manager Robin Carey? Was the reputation, and consequently, the effectiveness of service delivery to the poor individuals and families in the Eliot Social Services Agency suffering because of wanton disregard of the NASW Code of Ethics by both staff and directors on the ESSA Board?

Educating and training human service and social work practitioners in issues and situations involving these values, including diversity and cultural differences, is expected by the Council of Social Work Education and the National Association of Social Work. It has been repeatedly shown that along with field placements and a strong educational curriculum, the use of the case method furthers the accomplishment of this task. The cases presented here should be the basis of lively discussion and the sharing of ideas. The sociologically framed questions, aimed at developing the “sociological eye,” should also put in perspective the need for mezzo and macro analysis as well.

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