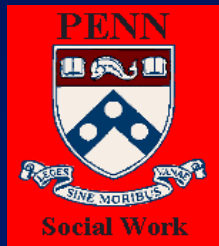


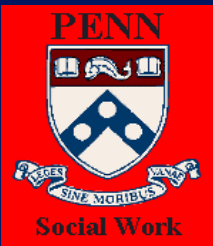
Presentation by Richard J. Estes

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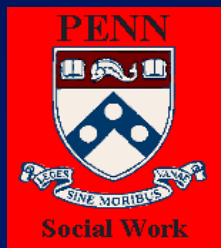


**Resolving
Ethical Dilemmas
in
Community Quality of Life
Practice & Research**

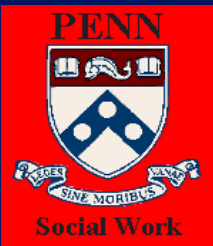


Presentation Objectives

- Define what is meant by “ethics” and “ethical behavior” in the context of community quality of life (CQOL)
- Identify recurrent ethical dilemmas that confront CQOL practitioners
- Discuss the contribution of Ethical Codes of Conduct in both guiding and regulating professional practice (including research practice)
- Suggest the broad outlines of the principles, standards and performance criteria that need to be included in a developing ethical code for *Community Quality of Life Practice and Research*



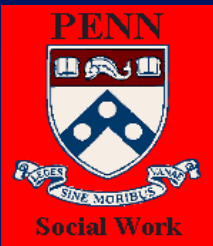
CONCEPTS



“Community”

1. people in a geographic area ...or the geographic area in which people live
 - e.g., *a neighborhood, close-knit farming community*
2. people with common background or with shared interests
 - e.g., *the financial community, the African-American, Hispanic or similar types of communities based on race, ethnicity, religion, language*
3. nations with a common history or shared economic or political interests
 - e.g., *the international community; the European Union; ASEAN; NAFTA*

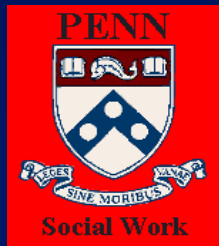




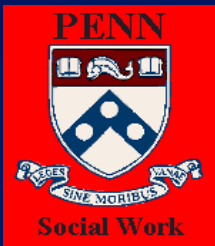
“Community” in the Context of Advancing QOL

- emphasizes the geographic community as the most immediate and effective locus for development
 - Butcher, 1994; Cnaan, 1991; Estes, 1997; McKnight, 1987; Midgley; Rubin, 1986; Twelvetrees, 1994
- places people at the center of development
 - Chi, 1985; Estes, 1992; Pernell, 1986; Rahman, 1993; UN/ESCAP, 1992b; UNDP, 1993
- encourages the creation at the “local” level of “civil society” organizations formed by people themselves to promote goals for which a public sector response either is unwanted, unneeded, or both
 - Estes, 1992, 1997, 2004





Ethics & Morals in Community QOL Practice



“Morals” vs. “Ethics”

■ “Morals”:

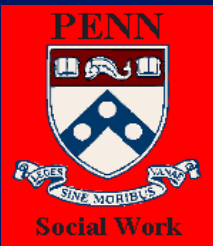
- *values and beliefs* concerning what is “right” and “wrong”, “good” and bad”, “just” and “unjust”

■ When effective, morals:

- » command respect and allegiance among organizational / association members
- » require impartiality and uniformity of implementation
- » are largely self enforcing, i.e., they are built into the intervention “fabric” of practitioners and researchers alike

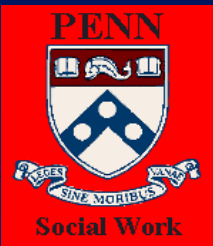
■ “Ethics”:

- *A discipline* that examines questions of what is morally right and wrong and how human being should behave



Ethics in Community QOL Practice

- **As a field of inquiry, community QOL ethics is only of recent origin**
 - Elias, et al., 1984; Heller, 1989
- **Rooted in practices of community social interventionists-- including those of community- and development-focused social workers, psychologists, economists and various advocacy groups**
 - Reisch & Rivera, 1999; Estes, 2004; Mendes, 2002; O'Neill, 1989
- **However, antecedents of *community QOL ethics* are found in both Eastern and Western philosophies...**
 - Confucius; Machiavelli; Kant; Friere; Sen
- **Also associated with utopian visions that seek to connect all members of human family to one another**



Ethics & Community QOL

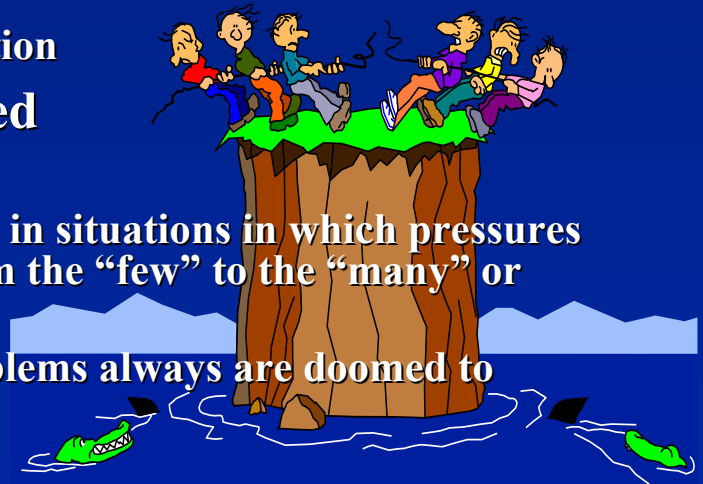
CQOL ethical considerations differ from those of general ethics in several ways:

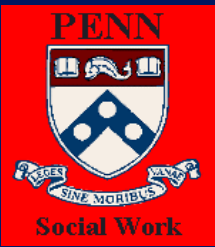
■ **The *scope* of the ethical issues considered**

- Social, political and economic issues are intertwined and cannot easily be separated from one another
 - » Accelerating economic growth
 - » Reducing poverty
 - » Promoting environmental protection

■ **The *complexity* of the issues involved**

- Often rooted in history and ideologies
- “win-lose” scenarios predominate, esp. in situations in which pressures exist to transfer power and wealth from the “few” to the “many” or from one community to another
- Short-term solutions to long-term problems always are doomed to failure

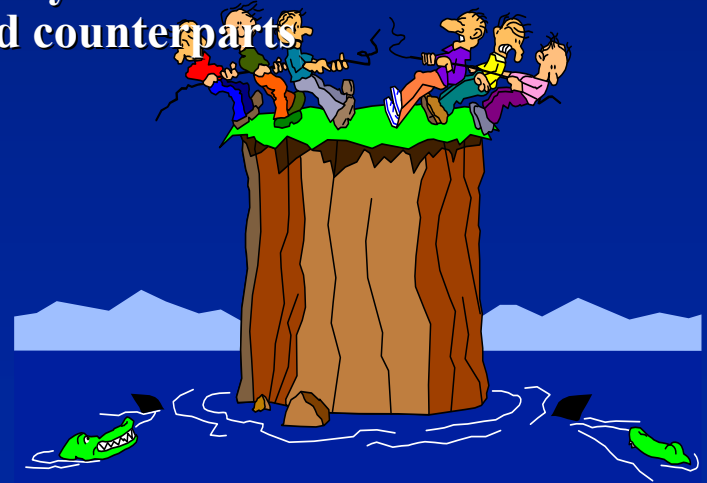


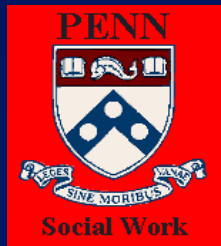


Ethics & Community QOL

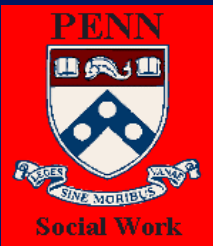
■ The *actors* involved

- ranging from individuals > local NGOs > county, state, regional, federal and even international governmental entities
- “civil society” and “social capital” also are important contributors to community effort
- Volunteers in many communities may be both more numerous and influential than even their paid counterparts.



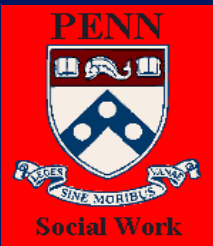


Recurrent Ethical Dilemmas in Community QOL Practice



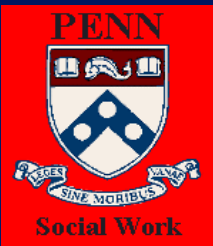
Ethical Dilemmas in Community QOL

- ***Confusion divergence of interventionist's values and those of the community*** (Heller, 1989; Julian, 1999)
 - personal values, much like ideologies, are central determinants of both an interventionist's
 - » understanding of the dilemmas confronting a community *and*
 - » the choices offered by interventionists to communities in advancing their QOL
- **The majority of value conflicts are associated with:**
 - » Differences in *religious beliefs & traditions*
 - » Differences in *political ideologies* --not just partisan differences (which can prove insurmountable), but differences in the definition of the “good society” and how to get there
 - » Differences in *Culture* (Al-Krenwai, 1999)
- **Each of these potential areas for conflicts in values contributes to *mis-communication* and *mis-understanding***



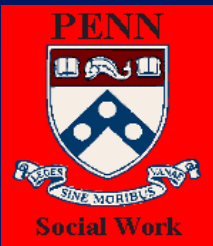
Ethical Dilemmas in Community QOL (cont'd)

- **Lack of clarity on the interventionist's part concerning the role of *community members as "co-producers"* of community QOL**
 - esp. when community participants are viewed as “clients”, or worse, as “patients”
 - in either situation, interventionists conceptualize themselves as
 - » being “in control” of the change process
 - » requiring a high degree of deference on the part of communities toward their recommendations for change
- **Lack of clarity on the interventionist's part concerning:**
 - community *history and norms*
 - the *community's vision* of its own future
- **Lack of clarity on the part of community's concerning the *role (and limits) of interventionists* in providing leadership to community change efforts**



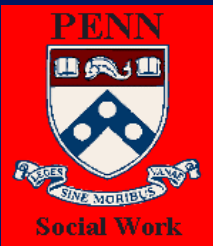
Ethical Dilemmas in Community QOL (cont'd)

- Differences also often exist with regard to the *goals* of community QOL
 - Whose goals and to what end?
 - » Community's vs. funders' goals
 - » Individual's vs. collective's
 - Inappropriate emphasis on short term accomplishments rather than the satisfaction of needs for the long-term
- Lack of clarity concerning *to whom the interventionist is accountable* (O'Neill, 1989)
 - To a personal/professional agenda?
 - To the community?
 - To funders??
 - To “society”, i.e., the “law” and “public policies”
 - To all of the above?
 - To none of the above?
 - To someone or some other entity?



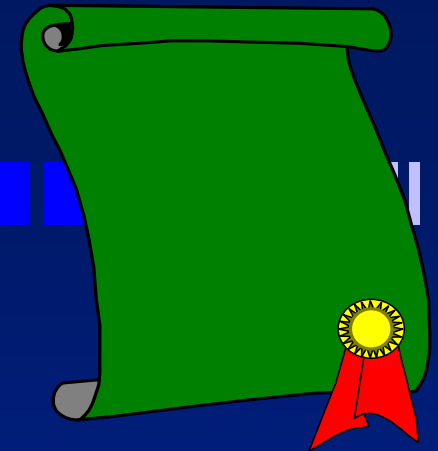
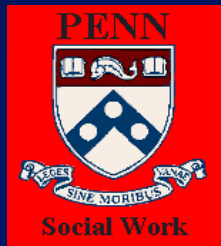
Ethical Dilemmas in Community QOL (cont'd)

- **Lack of clarity concerning *long-term consequences* of efforts that have short-term benefits (Mendes, 1999)**
 - **The introduction of “privacy-invading” technologies, including computers, data bases, passive observational techniques**
 - **Promoting activities that contribute to decreases in community social capital and in community solidarity**
 - » **centralization of information (and, hence, authority) in the hands of few persons**
 - » **Splintering advocacy and other special interest groups rather than promotion coalition-building**
 - » **Coalition-building that further disempowers the already disempowered**



Ethical Dilemmas in Community QOL (cont'd)

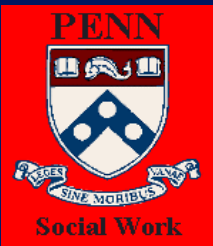
- *The mis-application of ethical principles developed for situations unrelated to community QOL practice* (Linzer, 1999; Loewenberg, 1992; Reamer, 1999; Robison & Reeser, 2000)
 - “Fuzzy” or no logic
 - Improper generalizations from inter-personal to situations involving larger aggregates of people and institutions
 - Reducing dilemmas to ready-made, “cookie cutter”, or “one-size-fits-all” solutions



Ethical Codes

And Their Use in

Resolving Ethical Dilemmas



Codes of Ethics: Toward Responsible & Accountable Practice

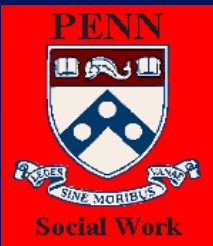
■ Specify the principles on which moral behavior is determined (Olson, 2004)

- Such standards usually reach beyond societal morality in order to give guidance to people within a group on issues that are specific to the group
 - » e.g., working toward the “public” rather than “private” interest (American Public Health Association; National Management Association)

■ Assign priority to frequently occurring conflicts in ethical principles

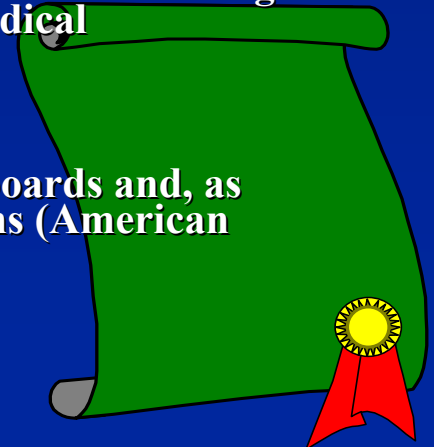
- In doing so, the purpose is to provide guidance on *how individuals are to act as morally responsible agents of the group* when conflicts exist between principles
 - » e.g., the “wants” of an individual vs. the “needs” of the many (American Society of Community Planners; American Psychological Association)

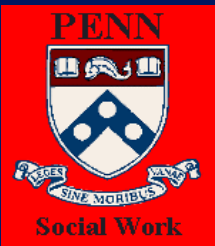




Codes of Ethics: Toward Responsible & Accountable Practice

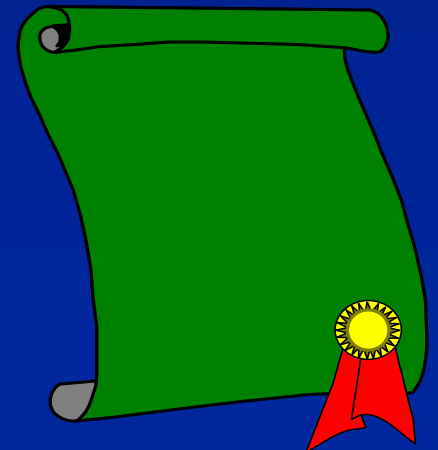
- Are visionary in the sense that they inspire practitioners toward a higher level of morality and ethical behavior
- Identify the standards against which implementation of the principles can be assessed
 - e.g., minimizing exclusion and exploitation of persons in less powerful positions (Association of Fundraising Professionals)
- Explicitly identify performance criteria
 - e.g., active vs. passive consultation; scheduling open vs. closed meetings (National Association of Social Workers; American Medical Association)
- Contain enforcement mechanisms
 - e.g., processes for filing ethical queries with oversight boards and, as warranted, complaints against violators of ethical norms (American Medical Association; NASW; AFRP)

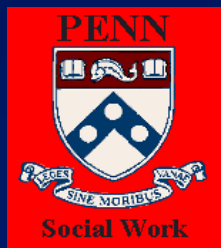




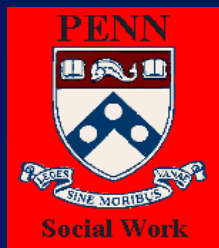
Codes of Ethics: Toward Responsible & Accountable Practice

- Contain mechanisms for the continuous review and renewal in response to changing societal and professional realities
- Provide sanctions against those who repeatedly or seriously violate the principles of the code





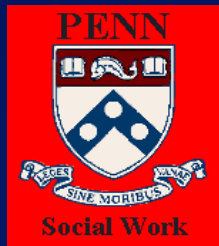
**TOWARDS A
CODE OF ETHICS
FOR COMMUNITY QOL
PRACTITIONERS**



Towards an Ethical Code for CQOL: The Necessary Ingredients

- A commitment to public service...with a special concern for advancing social justice and life quality of historically disadvantaged population groups (Julian, 1999:3-4; NASW, 2004)
- A commitment to the fullest possible participation of community members and other critical stakeholders in defining both the goals and methods of QOL intervention
- Transparency concerning all aspects of the intervention process
 - including in the ends, means, funding resources, short- and long-term implications

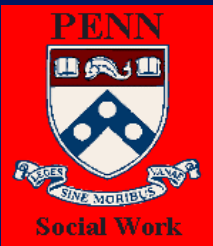




Towards an Ethical Code for CQOL: The Necessary Ingredients

- Transparency of interventionist's values vis-à-vis those of the community...as well as meaningful opportunities to resolve those conflicts as early in the intervention as possible (Reisch & Rivera, 1999:49-62)
- The provision of accurate and timely information to community residents and other stakeholders
- The promotion of activities that lead to increased choices and opportunities for community members (Sen, among others)

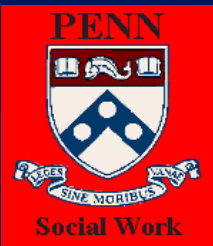




Towards an Ethical Code for Community QOL Practice (cont'd)

- Respect for diversity
- Respect for fairness
- Respect for privacy of individuals and community organizations engaged community QOL interventions, esp. given:
 - The sophistication of new and emerging technologies to deny people and organizations the privacy to which they are entitled
 - The ability to aggregate and disaggregate privacy-sensitivity data from a wide range of sources
 - the potential misuse of information to harm or otherwise control the behavior of individuals, organizations and communities

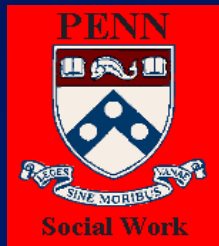




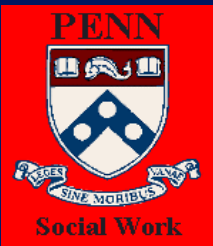
Towards an Ethical Code for Community QOL Practice (cont'd)

- An appreciation for and sharing of both the *actual* and potential unintended consequences of present actions
 - centralization of decision-making responsibility
 - Loss or diminishment of control for mapping one's own and their community's futures
- The framing of explicit performance/outcome criteria against which the success (and failure) of an intervention can be assessed



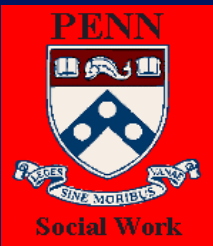


Elements to Avoid
In Framing A
Community-Focused
Ethical Code



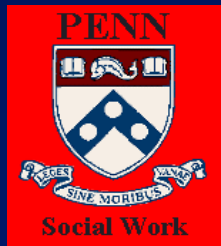
Elements to Avoid in Framing a CQOL Ethical Code

- Confusing *ends* and *means*, especially “process” with “outcomes”
- Rationalizing *unethical means* on the basis of the desirable ends that are to be achieved
 - Often results in manipulation and even exploitation of community participants
 - Frequently assigns higher priority to funders goals than those of the community
- Reducing complex problems to “ready made” or “out of the box” solutions
 - a “cookie cutter” approach to community norm setting and problem solving



Elements to Avoid in Framing a CQOL Ethical Code (cont'd)

- Assuming the *effectiveness* of intervention methods that have not been empirically tested
- The *application of ethical codes not suited to the realities of QOL practice*
 - Flaws in logic, e.g., in framing strategies in terms of inappropriate units of analysis
 - » e.g., the promotion of “personal” solutions to community problems that are clearly “structural” in origin (e.g., poverty, structural unemployment, etc.)
 - Generalizing from clinical to community paradigms (Heller, 1989; Julian, 1999)
 - » e.g., the application of the “medical model” vs. public health model to promote health in the community
 - Applying some other organization’s code to ethical dilemmas for which such codes were never designed



DISCUSSION