

# Service-Learning Code of Ethics

Andrea Chapdelaine  
*Albright College*

Ana Ruiz and Judith Warchal  
*Alberrnia College*

Carole Wells  
*Kutztown University*

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these experiences and place them in the context of the learning objectives and the larger mission of civic engagement.

Leming (2001) found that high school students who had ethical decision-making material integrated with their service-learning were significantly more systematic in their ethical reasoning and more likely to use an ethical viewpoint than those who participated in service-learning without this curriculum. Similar results with college students were found by Gorman, Duffy, and Heffernan (1994).

However, without clear guidelines about ethical decision-making practices, the process seems haphazard at best.

## Summary

Higher education currently professes a significant commitment to a mission of civic engagement. Academe as a whole has embraced many avenues by which to connect to and benefit its surrounding community and beyond. Service-learning is ideal for this commitment to the community because it relies heavily on the proven pedagogical method of active learning. Yet it often has been assumed that by simply partaking in service-learning experiences, civic engagement will be an inevitable result for the institution, faculty, and students.

We call for the recognition and examination of the ethical challenges one faces in service-learning experiences. In order for such ethical challenges to affect service-learning practitioners in a way that fosters democratic ideals, a set of pedagogical tools is required. These tools include guidelines, or what is more commonly called a *code of ethics*, specific to the service-learning context. Individuals must carefully examine this code (through reading, discussion, and written and oral analysis), practice it through hypothetical applications, actively use the code when faced with actual service-learning dilemmas, and finally, reflect critically upon these experiences. That set of tools is what comprises the body of this book. We recognize that developing a code of ethics is only one of many steps that must be taken to better connect service-learning to the goals of higher education, but we believe it is a critical element without which other efforts may not be as productive.

## Service-Learning Code of Ethics

### Morality, Values, and Ethics

The terms *morals*, *values*, and *ethics* are often used interchangeably to refer to the practices that enable a society to operate in the best interest of all its citizens. In the United States, those practices are articulated as the democratic ideals first promoted by the founding fathers and expanded through the democratic process. Ehrlich (2003) states, "America's democratic principles, including tolerance and respect for others, procedural impartiality, and concern for both the rights of the individual and the welfare of the group, are all grounded in moral principles" (p. 1). Morals are ideas about what is right and wrong. Morality is about the relationships between people and how they agree to live in a manner that protects the best interests of all. Morality also involves language and vocabulary "that permit the members of the society to engage in moral discourse for the purpose of evaluating the actions of individuals and the practices and institutions of the society" (Boatright, 2000, p. 23). Morality is not necessarily tied to religion, but is about the values a society holds dear. A moral dilemma occurs when there is a conflict between values and ideas about what is moral.

Values are the specific qualities that together comprise the morality of a society. Usually values involve the qualities that provide direction in everyday life. Some of these values may be culture-specific, while others are universal.

Values represent the comparative worth ascribed to things, whether of a tangible or intangible nature. A value orientation serves, in part, to shape the nature of

the ethical principles themselves, which then can be used as more explicit guidelines against which to measure individual behavior. . . . What is judged to be ethical in making these kinds of choices is a manifestation of values about what outcomes are more important than others, and about what actions and risks are reasonable and acceptable in seeking to reach these objectives. (Snow, Grady, & Goyette-Ewing, 2000, pp. 899–900)

Thus, values are essential to ethical decision-making, in that they direct the process.

Ethics are often considered to be the results of systematic reflection on morality and values (Purtilo, 1999). The study of ethics involves a process of deciding the best course of action when faced with a given situation. There are many ethical theories that can serve as guides in the decision-making process. Understanding the complexities of the theories can be a challenging endeavor that requires a strong background in philosophy. A complete review of these theories is beyond the scope of this book, but a broad outline follows; the reader is encouraged to explore further the philosophical foundations of ethical thought.

In what is probably an oversimplification, ethical theories can be divided into one of three categories: rule ethics, virtue ethics, and feminist ethics (Volbrecht, 2002). Rule ethics are concerned with answering the question, “What actions are right?” Rule ethics are derived from two classic ethics theories: deontological theories and teleological theories. Deontological theory, attributed to Immanuel Kant (1788/1949) and often referred to as Kantian theory, is based on an understanding of ethical action as resulting from duties and rights. It is every individual’s moral obligation, according to this theory, to do what “ought” to be done. What ought to be done is determined by what every rational being would agree is right. In general, it is akin to a universal law (rule) based on respect for human dignity. In this theory, every individual carries an inherent dignity and is therefore entitled to respect. Kant believed that some actions are inherently immoral, regardless of their consequences, and thus the means of the decision, not just the ends, must be considered. This theory may be problematic when duties or rights conflict.

Teleological theory (also referred to as utilitarianism), another rule-based theory, is concerned with the consequences of one’s actions. Deci-

sions are made based on the greatest balance of good over evil, or the greater good. Teleological theories are most closely associated with the work of Jeremy Bentham (1789/1939) and John Stuart Mill (1859/1939). The focus is on the action and the consequence. One should choose the action that will provide the greatest good to the greatest number of people. In essence, the end justifies the means. A difficulty with this theory is that to fully consider the consequences of one’s actions, it would be necessary to have knowledge of all possible consequences related to the act, which is rarely possible.

The second broad category of ethical theory is virtue ethics. Virtue ethics are not concerned with the rule, duty, obligation, or consequence of right action, but rather with the moral character of the individual making the decision. Virtue ethics have their foundation in the work of Aristotle, who proposed that the good life could only be achieved by a virtuous person. Community life is an essential element of the theory, for the virtuous individual lives in a community of close interpersonal relationships.

The third broad category of ethical theory is the most recent. Feminist theory, often referred to as the ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982), has a broad focus on the institutional reduction of oppressive societal forces, specifically with regard to policies that affect historically oppressed groups such as women and minorities. Key to this theory is the issue of power and how power is used to oppress and devalue women. Proponents of feminist ethics argue that traditional approaches to ethics (e.g., Kant, Bentham, Mill, and Aristotle) were based on typically masculine ideals and virtues that diminished the value of relationships and caring. Noddings (1984), in developing a feminine, relational approach to ethics, suggests that real care involves actual encounters with people, not just good intentions.

Individually, none of these ethical theories presents a perfect framework for ethical behavior. For example, rule ethics appear to provide the conceptual tools for a precise, objective way of rationalizing ethical decisions; but individuals make ethical decisions with their hearts, not only with their minds. Virtuous people who have good moral character make decisions that do not always follow the rules; but these decisions are ethically defensible just the same. Critics of feminist ethics argue that the ethics of care is not a new ethical theory, since many of its characteristics are encompassed in the basic principle of benevolence. They argue that ethical theory is not and should not be gender specific. Even feminist ethicists agree that there is no single feminist perspective on any one

moral issue. Thus the search for moral justifications through the application of ethical theories is far more complicated than it might first appear. Each encounter must be viewed as unique and examined in light of moral principles and all the constituencies involved. While community is an important concept in ethical decision-making, the resolution of an ethical dilemma requires a decision that balances the needs of the individual and society.

An ethical issue is any situation "embedded with important moral challenges" (Purtilo, 1999, p. 13). Ethical dilemmas have been defined as "situations when what is ethically correct is not clear, and any of several ethically defensible solutions may be arrived at, depending on one's analysis of the situation" (Weithorn, 1987, p. 230). Schaffer, Paris, and Vogel (2003) define an ethical problem in service-learning as "the experience of a conflict about the right thing to do" (p. 153). The dilemmas usually involve a conflict between two or more virtues (or principles) and two or more morally defensible courses of action. In other words, choosing one course of action (and following one virtue or principle) necessitates violating the other. In many cases, the ethical decision involves a judgment about which choice is the lesser of two evils (or the greater of two equal goods). Analysis is perhaps the most critical component of ethics. Through the analysis of the situation, the moral issues are defined, the value discrepancies identified, the conflicting principles acknowledged, and the potential solutions debated.

### **Ethical Deliberations in Service-Learning**

Service-learning presents situations where one's analysis of the situation may depend heavily on the perspective being taken or the constituency being served. By definition, service-learning requires attention and responsibility to multiple constituencies, including students, faculty, the academic institution, and the community. The analysis must consider the interests of all parties. Thus the levels of analysis (e.g., a stated institutional policy on sexual harassment is the institutional level, whereas protecting a student from sexual harassment in the community is both an individual and institutional issue) are an important consideration when choosing an ethical course of action. Service-learning, by definition, requires careful and deliberate reflection on the service project and an integration of the

service with the academic goals. The reflection requirement provides an excellent opportunity for deliberation over and analysis of the ethical issues encountered in service-learning.

### **Professional Codes of Ethics**

Codes of conduct have been widely established by many professional organizations to provide guidelines for professional behavior and for analysis of ethically difficult situations. These codes serve the dual purpose of protecting the community being served by the profession and providing the professionals with a framework of best practices. Ethical codes are usually the result of the need for a moral lens through which professionals can evaluate the practical dilemmas encountered in a particular profession. Professional codes of conduct seek to provide both mandatory and aspirational goals for the profession. However, no code of ethics can guarantee ethical behavior or resolve all of the ethical dilemmas faced by members of the profession. Codes of ethics have many limitations and are generally self-imposed by members of a profession. There is rarely complete agreement by members of the profession as to what constitutes right and wrong behavior; but, despite the inherent difficulties, Corey, Corey, and Callahan (1998) suggest that "Ethical codes are necessary, but not sufficient, for exercising ethical responsibility" (p. 7). Ethically responsible practice in any profession requires a careful examination of the individual and cultural circumstances of the situation.

Service-learning is no different. While not a profession itself, service-learning presents unique issues, problems, and situations for those who engage in it. In writing about the moral obligations of professors, Tellez (2000) sounds a caution that "no attention was given to the moral dilemmas faced by professors who require service learning" (p. 77). Tellez suggests that three of the nine principles for moral decision-making by college professors developed by Murray, Gillese, Lennon, Mercer, and Robinson (1996) directly apply to service-learning. These principles are 1) a necessity for pedagogical competence, 2) the need to deal with sensitive topics, and 3) the focus on student development. As more college professors require service-learning, the ethical dilemmas become more apparent.

Thus, our search for ethical guidelines for service-learning began with discipline-specific codes of ethics. It is easy to find a code of ethics

for psychologists, physical therapists, health care professionals, chemists, engineers, accountants, social workers, and music educators (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 1990; American Counseling Association, 1995; American Medical Association, 2001; American Society of Civil Engineers, 1996; National Association of Social Workers, 1999; National Organization for Human Service Education, 1996; National Society of Professional Engineers, 2003). Educators, as professionals in their chosen fields, also are often bound by the code of ethics specific to their fields. However, these codes do not address ethical issues relevant to the service-learning experience, although the majority of these codes include a mandate to provide a benefit to the community.

For example, the AAUP is widely recognized as the premier organization for facilitating the practice of teaching in colleges and universities. Interestingly, John Dewey, who is often considered the guiding force behind the current service-learning movement, served as the first chair of the AAUP's committee on university ethics in 1916. Although it does not address issues specifically related to service-learning, AAUP's (1990) Statement on Professional Ethics does instruct professors to "demonstrate respect for students as individuals and adhere to their proper roles as intellectual guides and counselors" (p. 76). Similarly, the American Council on Education (1995–2005) developed a set of strategic priorities, one of which focuses on service designed to "support colleges, universities, and other higher education and adult learning organizations in their efforts to serve students and society."

A review of the codes of ethics for specific professions reveals some noteworthy mandates that can be viewed as a justification for a service-learning curriculum. Professionals, who are charged with training the next generation of experts in their fields, demonstrate by example the elements of the code. Many codes include specific references to civic responsibility and leadership. For example, Section 10-d of the American Counseling Association's (1995) Code of Ethics discusses pro bono service. It states, "Counselors contribute to society by devoting a portion of their professional activity to services for which there is little or no financial return."

Similarly, the Ethical Standards of Human Service Professionals states, "Human service professionals, regardless of whether they are students, faculty or practitioners, promote and encourage the unique values and characteristics of

human service. In so doing human service professionals uphold the integrity and ethics of the profession, partake in constructive criticism of the profession, promote the client and community well-being, and enhance their professional growth. (National Organization for Human Service Education, 1996)

In addition, the National Association of Social Workers (1999) Code of Ethics states, "Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients." It also mandates, "The Code socializes practitioners new to the field to social work's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards."

In another example, Section III-2a of the Code of Engineers (National Society of Professional Engineers, 2003) states, "Engineers shall seek opportunities to be of constructive service in civic affairs and work for the advancement of the safety, health and well-being of their community." And, Section 7 of the Principles of Medical Ethics of the American Medical Association (2001) states, "A physician shall recognize a responsibility to participate in activities contributing to an improved society."

For examples of other ethical codes of conduct, with specific reference to social responsibility in the training of new professionals, the reader is encouraged to review Section IV of the Code of Ethical Conduct of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998), Professional Obligations of the American Society of Civil Engineers' (1996) Code of Ethics, Section 3.1 of the Association for Computing Machinery (1997), the American Society for Public Administration (2000) Code of Ethics, and the Chartered Financial Analyst (1999; formerly Association for Investment Management and Research) Code of Ethics.

These codes mandate civic engagement in general, but much like current discourses on service-learning, they don't specifically discuss how to engage in service-learning in an ethical way. At its core, service-learning is about relationships among faculty, students, the college or university, and community agencies, each group having different agendas, resources, and levels of power. A code of conduct is needed to provide standards and guidelines for appropriate professional conduct, roles, and responsibilities to guide the interaction among those involved in service-learning as well as the products of their labors. However, as indicated, no single existing code of ethics applies specifically to service-learning. Therefore, we propose a set of

principles as guidelines for ethical decision-making in service-learning experiences. Based on these principles, we propose a code specifically for service-learning and a model by which these principles can be applied to resolve an ethical dilemma encountered in service-learning. The principles proposed are beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice/fairness/equity, fidelity/responsibility, autonomy and respect for people's rights, and integrity.

## Ethical Principles

*Beneficence* is the act of doing good. The focus is on the promotion of good in service to others. The question of doing good leads to the question of "Good in whose best interest?" This principle is dependent on how one defines good and goodness.

*Nonmaleficence* means doing no harm, doing no evil, protecting others from harm. This involves acts of commission as well as omission. It involves knowing the limitations of one's expertise when serving others, and recognizing that even the best actions may have some harmful effects.

*Justice/fairness/equity* refer to impartiality, fair representation of facts, consistency, and comparable treatment of diverse populations and groups. Service involves The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

*Fidelity/responsibility* have to do with trustworthiness, faithfulness, performance, and careful observation of service obligations.

*Autonomy and respect for people's rights* refer to the promotion of self-determination—the freedom of the individual to choose his or her own destiny. Students, institutions, community agencies, and community participants should have an active role in service.

*Integrity* refers to accuracy and truthfulness in the practice of service. It involves the idea that honesty is important when dealing with others. Deception should be avoided.

## Service-Learning Code of Ethics

Ethical concerns and dilemmas in service-learning involve multiple constituents. Based on the aforementioned ethical principles, we propose a code of ethics for service-learning involving students, faculty, and administrators.

The code does not include guidelines for community agency personnel, because they will be guided by agency policies and the code of ethics of their professional disciplines.

### I. Students

- 1) Students in service-learning shall behave as professional representatives of the college/university at all times.
- 2) Students in service-learning shall understand their role and its limitations in the context of the service-learning assignment.
- 3) Students in service-learning shall adhere to the policies and procedures of the community agency.
- 4) Students in service-learning shall treat service recipients in a manner consistent with ethical principles.
- 5) Students in service-learning shall fulfill their service-learning commitment to the agency in accordance with the course requirements.
- 6) Students in service-learning shall agree to abide by any applicable legal and ethical guidelines.
- 7) Students in service-learning shall recognize and reflect upon potential challenges to their personal value systems.
- 8) Students in service-learning shall carefully consider all aspects of the service-learning assignment and consult with faculty members if participation would cause undue distress due to personal circumstances.

### II. Faculty

- 1) Faculty shall match community needs with academic service-learning goals prior to the beginning of the project to ensure that academic and community service goals can be achieved.
- 2) Faculty shall minimize potential harm to agencies, their constituents, and students.
- 3) Faculty shall provide community agencies with a plan that includes information about what is expected and required of students and the agency (e.g., accountability, commitment, consistency, and communication).

- 4) Faculty shall develop course goals consistent with service-learning objectives and communicate to the students, both verbally and in writing, the parameters of the service-learning requirement, including:
    - a) Academic objectives for the service-learning experience
    - b) Articulated community benefits
    - c) Time requirements
    - d) Students' roles and responsibilities
    - e) Legal and ethical guidelines on issues such as professionalism, liability, confidentiality, and insurance
    - f) Responses to emergencies (e.g., threats, weather, and health risks)
    - g) Expectations for integration into course material and reflection
    - h) Alternative assignment unless college policy requires service-learning
  - 5) Faculty shall properly train and inform students of their responsibilities and potential risks prior to the beginning of the service-learning activity.
  - 6) Faculty shall ensure that students understand the diverse characteristics of those with whom they will be working.
  - 7) Faculty shall treat all students in a manner consistent with ethical principles.
  - 8) Faculty shall maintain involvement with community agencies throughout the process and be responsive to changing needs and circumstances.
  - 9) Faculty shall be available to students for consultation or referral for problem solving and conflict resolution.
  - 10) Faculty shall assess the outcomes of this activity for the recipients, the community, and students.
- III. Administrators**
- 1) Administrators shall recognize and support opportunities for service-learning as part of a liberal education.

- 2) Administrators shall provide mechanisms for the institutionalization of civic engagement and resources for service-learning participation and service-related research.
- 3) Administrators shall be sensitive to and knowledgeable about community needs.
- 4) Administrators shall make every effort to minimize risky and unsafe locations and circumstances.
- 5) Administrators shall provide clear guidelines to faculty and students regarding liability and ethical issues.
- 6) Administrators shall provide faculty with opportunities for training and education in service-learning curriculum infusion.
- 7) Administrators shall treat all constituents in a manner consistent with ethical principles.

### Model of Ethical Decision-Making

Most models of decision-making follow similar steps with some minor variations (Corey, Corey, & Haynes, 1998; Kearsley, 2003; Purtilo, 1999). Using the above ethical principles and code of ethics, we propose the following six-step model of ethical decision-making applied to service-learning (see Table 2.1).

TABLE 2.1

<b>Model of Ethical Decision-Making</b>	
Step 1:	Identify and define the dilemma.
Step 2:	Address relevant principles and gather information.
Step 3:	Propose courses of action.
Step 4:	Determine and analyze the consequences for each proposed course of action.
Step 5:	Decide on the best course of action.
Step 6:	Evaluate and reflect on the decision.

The first step is to identify and define the dilemma. In this step, one must clearly delineate the dilemma so that all options can be analyzed. It is easier to solve a specific problem than a vague one; therefore, simplifying the problem and highlighting the most important factors are critical. Often there are competing goals to which different ethical principles could apply. In addition, the same ethical principle could mean different courses of action to different parties.

The second step is to address relevant principles and gather information. Sources include the principles, laws and regulations, and codes that may be applicable, and consultation with experts (e.g., supervisors, instructors, coworkers, and administrators). The person can then analyze the available information, determine if more information is needed, and organize the information to develop possible resolutions.

The third step is to propose as many courses of action as possible. These should include factors relevant to effective decision-making. Several good alternatives and as many factors as possible should be generated. If there is a long list of actions, they should be grouped into related factors.

The fourth step is to determine and analyze the consequences for each proposed course of action. These courses of action should be examined cautiously and defensively. That is, one should attempt to see why each proposed action might not work, as a way to highlight weak points. Based on this analysis, one can then eliminate or alter actions, or prepare contingency plans to counter possible negative outcomes.

The fifth step is to decide on the best course of action. If necessary, one should consult with appropriate sources to seek feedback on one's decision.

The final step is to evaluate and reflect on whether the selected course of action is the best one. This last step is crucial to moral growth through the resolution of the ethical dilemma. Among the many tests available, the pillow, newspaper, and child tests can be used to evaluate the decision selected. In these tests, the following questions can be posed and answered: Can you sleep with your decision? Would you be comfortable having your decision published in the newspaper? Would you tell a child to engage in this behavior?

# PART II

## Students



## Service-Learning Code of Ethics for Students

Students are the primary participants in any service-learning experience. Without the student, there would be no reason for service-learning. Yet students are often unprepared for the practical and professional aspects of service-learning. Because most of them have work experience and understand the rules of the work world, faculty often assume that the “New Millennials” (students born after 1982) are more experienced and savvy than they prove to be. Growing up in a desegregated country does not mean that they have abandoned the prejudices that continue to haunt their parents’ generation. Yet service-learning experiences often place students in situations that are quite different from their typical work or school experience, and they often find themselves floundering in a sea of expectations without clear direction. Many professional programs in colleges and universities provide students with instruction in ethics specific to their chosen discipline, but that training usually occurs in the final few courses of the student’s senior year, during which practical experience may be required. Thus, students in the freshman through junior years of college may be involved in service-learning projects without any formal training in ethical practice. The student section of the Service-Learning Code of Ethics (SLC) was developed with this in mind.

The student section of the code is designed to provide students with specific guidelines for behavior and decision-making during service-learning experiences. Students will undoubtedly find themselves in situations that they are ill equipped to handle due to inexperience. The nature of many service-learning experiences places students in circumstances where they act alone or in small groups, often without direct supervision from faculty. The SLC for students is not intended to be all-inclusive, nor will it

provide solutions to every problem students may encounter; it is instead designed to give students a benchmark for making good ethical choices.

The student section of the SLC makes explicit what faculty members might otherwise take for granted. It begins with a mandate that students behave as professional representatives of the college/university at all times. The first part of the student code depends heavily on faculty to explain to students what "professional" means for their particular institution and for the specific service-learning experience. Faculty preparation is a key component. Students cannot be expected to adhere to professional behavior if they have not received specific instruction in what "professional" looks like in the workplace. Equally important is the fact that the students are representing the academic institution in the community. One negative experience with a student has the potential of erasing years of positive interactions with a community partner. Students need to understand that their experience in the community affects more than just their own evaluations.

Students also need to understand that there are serious limitations to what they can and cannot do. Many times this takes the form of setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries for the activity. Students must recognize that when they agree to participate in a service-learning activity, they also agree to abide by the policies and procedures of the agency with which they are working. Again, this implies that the faculty member has ensured that the student will receive training in the appropriate policies and procedures of the agency; and that the agency agrees to provide the proper training.

The code for students stresses that all service recipients are treated with respect, honesty, fairness, and confidentiality. Higher education has a responsibility to promote the fundamental democratic principles of tolerance and respect for the diversity of human experience. Service-learning affords students the opportunity to recognize that they are members of a larger, diverse social context. Respect, honesty, and fairness are essential ingredients of any community-university partnership, and within a code of ethics, they provide a foundation for discourse about public issues.

When students agree to a service-learning project, they must fulfill their obligations to the community. If a student leaves the agency prior to completing the assignment, faculty and community staff are faced with either providing the service or abandoning the project. Presenting stu-

dents with a specific code should help to underscore the seriousness of the experience and the potential legal implications involved.

The student code emphasizes that students may experience mild to intense personal reactions to the service-learning experience. Students may find their value systems challenged and perhaps changed through service-learning. Students need to know that there are resources available to them through faculty, community staff, or the college counseling center should they need assistance in coping with difficult situations and personal value exploration. The reflection central to the service-learning experience is an excellent opportunity for this process of inquiry. However, the code also recognizes that certain service-learning assignments may create a personal dilemma for a student who is unable to participate in the activity because of mitigating private circumstances. It is then the student's responsibility to consult with the faculty member to resolve the impasse in a way that does not compromise the integrity of the course assignments.

Ehlich (2003), a proponent of service-learning as a tool for the development of moral and civic responsibility, states, "Higher education should encourage and facilitate the development of students' capacities to examine complex situations in which competing values are often at stake, to employ both substantive knowledge and moral reasoning to evaluate the problems and values involved, to develop their own judgments about those issues, and then to act on their judgments" (p. 2). A possible benefit of providing students with a code of ethics for service-learning is the opportunity to begin a dialogue that encourages ethical behavior in every setting, regardless of discipline. A just society depends on informed, committed, socially responsible leaders who practice ethical decision-making in every situation. Thus, the following student SLC is proposed.

#### **I. Students**

- 1) Students in service-learning shall behave as professional representatives of the college/university at all times.
- 2) Students in service-learning shall understand their role and its limitations in the context of the service-learning assignment.
- 3) Students in service-learning shall adhere to the policies and procedures of the community agency.

- 4) Students in service-learning shall treat service recipients in a manner consistent with ethical principles.
- 5) Students in service-learning shall fulfill their service-learning commitment to the agency in accordance with the course requirements.
- 6) Students in service-learning shall agree to abide by any applicable legal and ethical guidelines.
- 7) Students in service-learning shall recognize and reflect upon potential challenges to their personal value systems.
- 8) Students in service-learning shall carefully consider all aspects of the service-learning assignment and consult with faculty members if participation would cause undue distress due to personal circumstances.

## *Chapter Four*

### Conflict Between Student Personal Commitments and Service-Learning Requirement

**B**arry is a four-year social work major with a minor in Spanish. After graduation, he plans to work in the inner city in foster and adoptive family services, abuse assessment, and child advocacy. Barry believes that completing his Spanish minor will be a valuable tool in becoming a more effective social worker. At this point, he has completed 12 of the 18 credits required for the minor. Barry enrolls in a six-credit capstone class in advanced Spanish (i.e., Intensive Spanish III/IV). One of the graded requirements for this class is a 45-hour service-learning experience. Students in this class are to engage in various activities at a nonprofit agency for Hispanic immigrants, whose mission is to help its clients develop valuable life skills, educational enrichment, citizenship and leadership behavior, and resourcefulness.

The instructor, Dr. Jones, requires that students use their Spanish-speaking skills to tutor and mentor the children, adolescents, and adults served by this agency. Students will be helping clients with adjustment problems, homework, and assimilation into the community. Dr. Jones's goals for service-learners in the class are to improve their Spanish oral and written communication skills and enhance their understanding of Hispanic culture. She also expects students to speak Spanish in class while discussing their field experiences, including a reflection on their personal reactions to the tutoring experience and how cultural differences affect their work.

Most students in the class are able to balance this service-learning requirement with their other academic and work-related commitments. However, because Barry is married with a small child and has a full-time

job as an assistant manager for a local convenience store, this assignment presents problems for him. Up to this point, his manager has been flexible and allowed him to take classes during the day and make up the hours in the evenings and on weekends.

Barry stays after the first class and explains to Dr. Jones that he cannot complete the service requirement, although he believes it would be beneficial to him. Dr. Jones reminds Barry that the syllabus clearly states this is a requirement for the class. She reviews past successes and tells Barry that she has been using this method of teaching conversational Spanish for the last five years. She assures him that any personal sacrifice he would need to make to complete this assignment would be well worth the effort.

### Step 1: Identify and Define the Dilemma

The service-learning code provides a framework for understanding conflicting and competing personal and professional goals. Despite Barry's intentions to learn as much as possible in his classes and do well, he is experiencing conflict about completing the course. According to the code, students are required to *fulfill their service-learning commitment to the agency in accordance with the course requirements* (SLC 1.5), and yet, *faculty must treat all students in a manner consistent with ethical principles* (SLC II.7).

According to Dr. Jones, her past practices in this course are clear to all students and her syllabus unambiguously outlines these requirements (SLC II.4). During her conversation with Barry, she points out that previous student experiences and the literature support this assignment as an extremely effective pedagogical strategy and a useful way to become skilled in conversational Spanish. She stresses the added benefit of enhanced class and group discussions. Dr. Jones, therefore, believes that in order to be fair to the other students in the class and provide a rich experience for Barry, he should be required to participate.

### Step 2: Address Relevant Principles and Gather Information

As a nontraditional student, Barry always tries to see the bigger picture and appreciates his professors' efforts to apply course material to the "real

world." He understands that Dr. Jones's interest in associating community service with academic experience is a profitable and useful way of skill development in Spanish. However, he feels that his personal, professional, and academic responsibilities are at odds with each other.

In this instance, as outlined and described in Chapter 2, the principle of beneficence, the act of doing good, suggests a mutually satisfying relationship between Barry and community agency clients. He will improve his ability to communicate with future clients and enhance his understanding of their culture. But, if he is promoting the good of agency clients, what about the good of his family and his responsibilities to them? Barry wrestles with the conflict between his personal responsibility to his wife and child and his academic responsibility. In other words, he is unsure how to resolve this dilemma in a fair and just way.

In an effort to gather more information and ideas, Barry talks to students who belong to a nontraditional student organization on campus. They recommend that he try to negotiate with the instructor a similar assignment or extra-credit work that would require less-structured, off-campus hours. His peers empathize with Barry and support his desire to do well and be as prepared as possible for future employment. They are concerned that this assignment might create an added burden that could adversely affect him physically, psychologically, and emotionally.

### Step 3: Propose Courses of Action

Barry considers several options. He could:

- *Action A:* Drop his minor in Spanish and take two others courses to make up the six credits.
- *Action B:* Talk to Dr. Jones about offering an alternate assignment.
- *Action C:* Drop the class and delay graduation, hoping to reduce his work hours and take this course next semester.
- *Action D:* Request that his work hours be structured around the service-learning requirement, recognizing that this will be a difficult semester.
- *Action E:* Reduce his work hours and seek financial support.

#### Step 4: Determine and Analyze the Consequences for Each Proposed Course of Action

*Action A:* Drop his minor in Spanish and take two others courses to make up the six credits.

*Positive:* For Barry, dropping his minor in Spanish is a relatively straightforward and easy solution to this dilemma. He could drop this course and pick up six credits in two less-demanding free elective courses.

*Negative:* Because Barry is sure he ultimately wants to work closely with the Hispanic community, he thinks it would be a mistake to drop his minor in Spanish. He knows that some fluency in Spanish would add to his credibility and be useful with this population. Because the period for adding classes has passed, Barry would be able to drop this course but would have difficulty scheduling and obtaining permission from two professors to be added to their class rosters. In addition, he would lose his full-time status and financial aid if he cannot replace these six credits.

*Action B:* Talk to Dr. Jones about offering an alternate assignment.

*Positive:* Selecting an alternative to the service-learning requirement for this class would give Barry an opportunity to fulfill the course requirements, continue his current work schedule, satisfy his Spanish minor, and complete his degree requirements on time.

*Negative:* Barry is willing to consider other activities but recognizes that Dr. Jones offered no alternate options. At the same time, he realizes that the syllabus clearly outlines what is needed to earn the six credits in this class. As a conscientious and committed student, Barry has never asked for an exception to course requirements. He is unsure how this would affect faculty perceptions about his ability to be a flexible yet hard-working social worker.

*Action C:* Drop the class and delay graduation, hoping to reduce his work hours and take this course next semester.

*Positive:* This remains a viable option for Barry. He hopes that if he has an additional semester, he can develop a creative solution to meet both his workplace and home demands. This solution would reduce Barry's stress level and give him an opportunity to spend more time with his wife

and child. In addition, he would not be rushing through the course and would be able to spend more time learning the material.

*Negative:* This solution would postpone Barry's ability to complete his degree in a timely fashion, obtain employment, and begin repaying his large debt. Barry believes achieving goals are part of being a good student, worker, and citizen. He regrets not being a serious and committed student when he was younger and is uncomfortable about deviating from his plans.

*Action D:* Request that his work hours be structured around the service-learning requirement, recognizing that this will be a difficult semester.

*Positive:* Barry is torn between discussing these demands on his schedule with his supervisor and finding other employment. He realizes that his boss has always been supportive and flexible in the past and is hopeful that his boss is once again willing to meet his needs.

*Negative:* Barry is concerned that if he asks his boss for one more scheduling change, he will be fired and then will have to search for other employment. This would be time-consuming and would create a financial hardship for his family. On the other hand, if Barry decides to continue in the class, he realizes this would be a difficult semester. He might be unable to contribute fully because of fatigue, stress, and time pressures. This could result in poor grades, reducing his chances of admission to a Masters of Social Work program later on. In addition, his health could suffer along with his marriage, creating a dilemma in his personal life not unlike the problems he hopes to help others resolve someday as a social worker.

*Action E:* Reduce his work hours and seek financial support.

*Positive:* Barry could reduce his weekly work hours and ask his wife to add more hours to her schedule at a fast-food restaurant. This option would afford him more time to study and also to work with clients and develop a better understanding of the Hispanic community and culture.

*Negative:* This does not seem to be a viable solution because Barry and his wife are already concerned about their current debt and the effect their work schedules will have on their two-year-old daughter. In addition, Barry has had a long-standing arrangement with his boss to work a fixed number of hours each week. If his boss is not amenable to reduced hours, Barry could lose his job. Because Barry and his wife have overextended themselves, resulting in poor credit, it is unlikely they would be able to borrow more money.

### Step 5: Decide on the Best Course of Action

While none of the proposed courses of action provides an ideal solution for Barry, he decides on Action D, which is to request a change in his work hours. He explains the course requirement to his wife and boss and anticipates a stressful and demanding semester. Although his wife is not happy, she decides to be as supportive as possible. Reluctantly, Barry's boss is willing to make some minor adjustments, enabling Barry to change his work schedule slightly to accommodate the service-learning hours.

Ideally, Barry wants to be a good husband, father, employee, and student. These conflicting roles have created a dilemma that is not easily resolved. Ultimately, Barry decides to make the best of a difficult situation.

### Step 6: Evaluate and Reflect on the Decision

Barry resents what he considers to be an additional burden and feels that he is being forced to participate in an activity that places added demands on his already stressful life. He is concerned about how all this extra work will affect his wife and child. He is not sure he can sustain such a rigorous schedule throughout the semester without adversely affecting his health, family, and grades.

Barry is unwilling to drop his minor, because fluency in Spanish will help him with community relations and help him to become a better employee and social worker. Neither selecting two substitute courses nor dropping this course are viable options for Barry. He is reluctant to delay graduation and change his goals with so few courses left to graduate. And, Barry and his wife agree that reducing his work hours and incurring more debt will only add stress to their already demanding budget.

Despite the potential negative consequences, Barry remains committed to his program of study and is willing to make the sacrifice if it helps him become a better social worker. In addition, he has frequently felt disengaged from the younger students in his class and hopes this experience will help him feel more connected to other students and to the college. He reflects on how he would explain this decision to his child someday and clearly sees the long-term benefits. Barry is, however, unsure about partici-

pating in community service in the future because of the hardship he will endure this semester.

In the process of resolving this dilemma, though, Barry has gained experience in ethical decision-making and dealing with competing demands and courses of action. He recognizes that in the world of work he may be faced with contradictory decisions and behaviors and will, therefore, need to use critical thinking strategies to deal with clients, referral services, community, state and federal regulations, and the legal system. Barry vows that, whatever the situation, he will be respectful and responsible and will consider the perspectives of all parties to provide clients and families with the best and most useful solutions to their problems and dilemmas.

In sum, when applying the pillow, newspaper, and child tests, Barry is satisfied with his course of action. With the support of his family and recognition of the long-term benefits of his decision, he will be able to sleep comfortably. He would be pleased to have his story of commitment and motivation published in the local newspaper and would have no problem explaining to his children the worthiness of the choices he made.

#### Related Issues

The demographics of the typical college student are changing as a larger number of nontraditional students are attending colleges and universities to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees. These students are usually 25 years of age or older and are working full time, supporting aging parents, and often raising children. This case provides an example of the ethical dilemmas faced by nontraditional students on a daily basis. They often make difficult choices and decisions as they attempt to meet work, family, and school demands. Engaging in yet another activity can create an additional burden. Instructors are, therefore, faced with difficult decisions as they structure course requirements to provide the best and most effective learning experience for all students. Is it realistic to expect someone who is working and supporting a family to not only spend long hours studying but also to engage in service in the community? Should course requirements be adjusted for the nontraditional student? What are college and university faculty and administrators' responsibilities for the quality of education for the nontraditional student? Can and should we make accommodations? Service-learning is based on university, community, and

individual common good or benefit. If this is the case, are we overlooking or ignoring the personal good of these nontraditional students in order to accomplish public good?

### Additional Dilemma

Sarah is a new student in a psychology program at a local college. She is returning to school after raising her children and anxiously attends her first class. She is dismayed to find that her introductory psychology course has a service-learning component at a local nonprofit agency for inner-city, at-risk youth. Sarah is on the executive advisory board for another similar agency in the community. Both agencies and their boards have been competing over the last five years for limited community resources.

Sarah has enjoyed her community activities for over 15 years and believes this service-learning component will be useful to the agency and the students. In addition, she wants to do well in all her classes and in particular her first class. However, she is unsure how her agency would view her participation in this community service. Would they consider her a traitor for helping a competing agency? Would the class-designated agency think of her as a spy?

Sarah is hesitant about talking to her professor, since he seems committed to this activity and eager to have the students participate. She does not want to be viewed as a difficult student and is unwilling to question her professor's authority and the course requirements.

- 1) Identify the ethical dilemma.
- 2) Why is it an ethical dilemma? Identify the relevant codes.
- 3) Identify and list information you think would be helpful in making a decision.

- 4) List at least three possible solutions to this dilemma.
- 5) Which of the proposed solutions would you choose?
- 6) Why would you choose this solution?
- 7) How would you evaluate whether this is a good solution?

## Confidentiality and Student Responsibility to Agency

Julie, a 20-year-old psychology major and a junior at a local university, is involved in her first service-learning course. The course is Human Development and the service-learning project involves understanding the impact of poverty at different stages of development. Julie is a commuter student who lives with her parents in a very small residential neighborhood near the university. Her immediate and extended families are very close and have been residents of the community for several generations. Julie hopes to continue her education and become a master's-level counselor who works with children and families. She has chosen a homeless shelter as the site of her service-learning project. The shelter provides many services that help families in need maintain their family unit. It also operates a food bank that is open to all members of the community. In order to participate in all aspects of the services provided by the shelter, Julie spends a day in the food bank.

In an attempt to meet the needs of the community, the food bank provides emergency food supplements to needy individuals and families, and is designed to aid those who have left the shelter and are now living independently in the community. While at the food bank, Julie encounters a situation that she is totally unprepared to handle. She sees her Uncle Ed enter the food bank to obtain a week's supply of food. Her uncle makes eye contact with her, but doesn't approach her or make any effort to talk with her. Julie is sure that he not only saw her, but recognized her as well. She is too surprised to do anything but stare in disbelief. Uncle Ed stands in line with the other recipients, takes the bag of food that is offered to him, and leaves. Julie is confused and angry. She questions whether to tell her family about Uncle Ed's visit to the food bank. Does Uncle Ed need



help? Certainly her family would provide all the help he needs. She is angry because Uncle Ed does not seem to need financial help. He lives in a very nice house, buys a new car every other year, and seems financially secure. What is he doing at a food bank?

First and foremost, is there an ethical dilemma? What should Julie do? What is Julie's responsibility to the food bank? To her uncle? To her family? What ethical principles apply to this situation?

### Step 1: Identify and Define the Dilemma

Using the structure proposed in Chapter 2 for the ethical decision-making process, Julie needs to consider several factors. She is faced with a dilemma that arose from multiple and competing goals. Julie is torn between her duty to *treat service recipients in a manner consistent with ethical principles* (SLC 1.4), her responsibility to *adhere to the policies and procedures of the community agency* (SLC 1.3), and her personal desire to inform her family that a family member is in need (SLC 1.7). She is also concerned that her uncle may be cheating the system and utilizing scarce resources that may be desperately needed by other members of the community.

### Step 2: Address Relevant Principles and Gather Information

Julie's initial reactions are a very important factor in this situation. Julie is too stunned to do anything when she observes her uncle. Julie wants to tell her family about seeing Uncle Ed at the food bank. She knows that they would be very willing to help Uncle Ed if he were truly in need. She feels personally conflicted about her responsibility to her uncle and other family members. She also wants to tell the director of the food bank that Uncle Ed is taking resources from families that are in greater need. She realizes that she is experiencing a range of very strong conflicting emotions that include anger, surprise, and confusion.

Julie's first task is to do nothing until she is able to make some sense of her own reactions to this situation. The fact that she was too surprised to respond when she saw her uncle at the food bank was probably the best-case scenario, because it gave Julie the time she needed to carefully consider her options. Had she approached her uncle in the food bank, she may

have experienced unintended consequences, such as embarrassing him unnecessarily or creating an unpleasant scene for both of them. There may be valid reasons for her uncle's appearance that have nothing to do with her initial assumptions or reactions. For instance, her uncle might be picking up the bag of food for a neighbor or friend who has no transportation. So Julie must decide if she is overreacting to this situation or if there is an actual ethical issue that needs to be resolved and addressed.

Next, Julie needs to consider what ethical principles apply to this case. The primary issue in this case is one of confidentiality, which involves the principle of autonomy and respect for people's rights. Does Julie's uncle have a right to privacy and confidentiality? Does Julie have any legal or ethical responsibility to respect her uncle's privacy and maintain his right to confidentiality? What is Julie's obligation because of her status as a student representing the university? If Uncle Ed is acting unethically by taking food (resources) from others, does Julie have a responsibility to tell the director of the center?

A more troubling ethical issue, stemming from the ethical principles for service-learning experiences, involves the issue of justice, specifically the fair use of scarce resources. Julie knows that the food bank is not able to provide for the needs of all the individuals who line up outside the doors for food. When the food runs out, people are turned away. Julie does not perceive her uncle as needy and she knows that Uncle Ed's family would gladly assist him if they knew of his plight. It is her perception that Uncle Ed is taking food from others who need it more than he.

Who can help Julie with this situation? The agency director is certainly one resource. Julie can propose a hypothetical situation to the director to maintain her uncle's privacy at this point in the discussion. Through this consultation, Julie would discover if the food bank has a policy of confidentiality or privacy that applies to the people it serves and if the agency has specific criteria based on need. If so, Julie is faced with the reality that her uncle may actually meet the need criteria. If the food bank does not have specific need criteria, then Uncle Ed's behavior may be selfish, but totally permissible by the standards of the food bank. Uncle Ed may not be living by the equity principle of justice and fairness, and his actions may be harmful to others, but Julie is unable to intervene without violating her responsibility to adhere to the policies of the agency. Julie is faced with many ethical issues and needs to sort them out.

The faculty member would be an excellent choice for consultation. The faculty member has an ethical obligation to the agency and needs to provide adequate supervision to the student to ensure the agency's right to confidentiality. However, many faculty members do not consider themselves equipped to handle strong emotional reactions and personal conflicts such as the ones Julie is experiencing. In planning a service-learning experience, members of the faculty need to consider the wide range of possible consequences that community involvement may produce. The professor should help Julie through this situation or refer her to another professional who would be able to help her sort out her conflicting emotions.

In addition to the SLC, the American Psychological Association's (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct is applicable in this case. As a psychology student, Julie needs to be aware of the guidelines for professional behavior that are provided by the relevant professional organizations. This is certainly an issue Julie can explore in her service-learning reflection papers. The reflections may help her identify, clarify, and analyze her reactions and the ethical issues involved. An additional reflection activity might be a class discussion of ethical issues students encounter while participating in their service-learning experiences. Thus all students in the class may learn vicariously through a discussion of Julie's experience.

### Step 3: Propose Courses of Action

The next step in the process of ethical decision-making would provide Julie with the opportunity to explore the range of options available to her. Julie might decide to:

- *Action A:* Say nothing to anyone about her uncle.
- *Action B:* Confront her uncle directly.
- *Action C:* Discuss the situation with her family.
- *Action D:* Maintain her uncle's right to confidentiality after consultation.

### Step 4: Determine and Analyze the Consequences for Each Proposed Course of Action

*Action A:* Say nothing to anyone about her uncle.

*Positive.* If Julie decides to keep this information to herself, she is choosing to maintain her uncle's right to confidentiality, and she is respecting his right to autonomy.

*Negative.* The negative consequence is that Julie must then deal with the range of conflicting emotions she is experiencing, and this may impair her ability to function effectively in class and at the homeless shelter. She may be afraid of seeing her uncle a second time. Another problem with this option is that while Julie might be able to maintain her uncle's "secret," she may not be able to fulfill her responsibility to the agency. As a student, she has a responsibility to *adhere to the policies and procedures of the agency* (SLC I.3), and such policies may require her to report any suspected fraud.

*Action B:* Confront her uncle directly.

*Positive.* Julie may still be troubled that her uncle is cheating the system. After consulting with her college and onsite supervisors, Julie may find that it is acceptable for her to confront her uncle. The positive consequence of this action is that Julie is able to discuss her conflicting emotions directly with her uncle, and possibly feel better that she has vented her frustrations.

*Negative.* While an honest confrontation would be the most direct intervention, a negative consequence might be the unintended embarrassment and/or alienation of her uncle.

*Action C:* Discuss the situation with her family.

*Positive.* If Julie decides to discuss the situation with her family, she may feel better about "getting it off her chest," and this may seem like a positive consequence for Julie.

*Negative.* Julie could be violating the policies and procedures of the agency and her uncle's right to confidentiality. This is often one of the most difficult lessons for students in human service professions. The concept of confidentiality often means keeping information from spouses and

family. An academic service-learning experience is an excellent opportunity for students to practice this skill.

*Action D:* Maintain her uncle's right to confidentiality after consultation.

*Positive:* Julie will maintain her uncle's right to confidentiality after consultation with her supervisors. Julie has received support from her supervisors and she can use them as a resource for discussing any lingering negative feelings she may have. If another situation with her uncle arises in the agency, her supervisors will be aware of the circumstances and they will be in a better position to handle the situation or help Julie through it.

*Negative:* An unintended negative consequence of this course of action involves Julie personally. She feels embarrassed about her uncle's situation and finds it difficult to share this "secret" with her supervisors. She also has to determine how she will manage her feelings when she sees her uncle at a family event.

### Step 5: Decide on the Best Course of Action

Julie's best course of action appears to be Action D. With this option she abides by the SLIC as well as the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association. She has used the process of consultation to help clarify her responsibilities and has learned a valuable lesson about confidentiality in the helping profession.

### Step 6: Evaluate and Reflect on the Decision

Julie's decision to maintain her uncle's right to confidentiality is probably in her uncle's best interest. It may be the best solution in terms of the ethical principles of autonomy and respect for people's rights, which involve issues of confidentiality, but Julie may have unresolved questions about her uncle's use of scarce resources. Using the pillow test to evaluate this decision, Julie finds herself wrestling with some sleepless nights when she thinks of needy people in the community who may be denied resources because of her uncle's behavior. She understands the need to keep information confidential, but she is beginning to realize that these decisions are very complicated and may involve personal distress. Julie is comfortable

with her decision when it is put to the newspaper test. Julie finds herself wondering about how a child might evaluate her action.

### Related Issues

This case raises another issue that involves the development of ethical reasoning skills through service-learning experiences. As suggested earlier, the APA code of ethics can be used as a guide in this situation. It is uncertain at what point during the preparation of an undergraduate student of psychology the APA and the APA code of ethics should be introduced. The code of ethics is mentioned in introductory psychology courses during discussions of ethical practice in research, but more practice-oriented aspects of the code may not be introduced until a senior-level internship course.

While membership in the APA commits members to adhere to the APA code, nonmembership does not absolve students from the duty to be aware of the code and responsibility to abide by it in the practice of the profession. Since Julie is enrolled in a psychology course and practicing in the field, the APA code is a good place to begin to search for guidelines. It would be the faculty member's responsibility to prepare Julie for the service-learning experience by providing her with applicable APA code of ethics guidelines before she begins her service-learning experience. This does not mean that every course should examine every aspect of a professional code. However, professional codes of ethics can be incorporated into the course content of a service-learning course when instructors provide code guidelines specific to the experience. Julie, as a psychology student, should have been made aware of the APA code as a guide to behavior. This raises the general question of whether students in all disciplines need to be educated about the professional code of ethics much earlier in their formal undergraduate experience.

### Additional Dilemma

A computer information course with a service-learning component has students install programs on the computers of a nonprofit community service agency. While installing a program, a student discovers information about a family member stored on the computer. This is sensitive information about a health condition of the family member, and the student is certain that no one in the family is aware of this information. Since

the health condition is potentially contagious, the student is conflicted about his responsibility to keep his family safe and his responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of the information he gathers through his work as a computer specialist.

- 1) Identify the ethical dilemma.
- 2) Why is it an ethical dilemma? Identify the relevant codes.
- 3) Identify and list information you think would be helpful in making a decision.
- 4) List at least three possible solutions to this dilemma.
- 5) Which of the proposed solutions would you choose?
- 6) Why would you choose this solution?
- 7) How would you evaluate whether this is a good solution?

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## Chapter Six

### Research and Informed Consent

Jessica is a senior biology major who is completing a service-learning project for a capstone course in her program. The project involves developing a hands-on biology class activity for a class of seventh-grade students in a general science classroom. The students in this class have been working on science fair projects for six months. The projects are nearly complete when Jessica begins her service-learning project. As she spends the first week of this assignment observing the classroom, she has no role in the design of the projects. The projects are all presented at a science fair exhibition where professors from local colleges and universities judge the entries and determine which projects will be entered in a regional competition. One student in Jessica's classroom has been chosen to enter his project in the next level of competition. The student is excited about this recognition and is eager to compete. The supervising teacher asks Jessica to spend some extra time with this student to help him prepare his project for the competition. Jessica, an avid researcher in her undergraduate program, gladly accepts the task.

The teacher gives Jessica the list of regulations for the competition. In reviewing the project with the student, Jessica realizes that the student's research, which rested the claims of two different whitening toothpastes, involved human participants. In designing the project, the student had not prepared an informed consent form for the participants or obtained any type of written consent from them, their parents, or the school officials. The rules for the regional competition clearly state that documented informed consent is necessary for any project that involves human participants. Jessica brings this to the attention of the classroom teacher who supervised the original research. The teacher tells Jessica that she did not review the rules for the regional competition before approving the student's project. She also tells Jessica that "it's only a seventh-grade science

fair project,” and instructs her to make up an informed consent form and have her friends sign the names of the participants so that the paperwork will be in order and the student will be able to enter his project into the competition.

What should Jessica do? Is there an ethical dilemma in this situation? What is Jessica’s responsibility to the student? To the supervising teacher? To the college she represents? What ethical principles apply to this situation?

### Step 1: Identify and Define the Dilemma

Despite her best intentions of completing a service-learning assignment, Jessica has stumbled upon a complex situation that she is now forced to manage. SLC 1.3 states that *students must adhere to the policies and procedures of the community agency, yet SLC 1.6 states that the student agrees to abide by any applicable legal and ethical guidelines*. As a senior biology student, Jessica was involved in many research projects under the supervision of her college faculty. She learned the appropriate ethical guidelines for conducting research, especially those that pertain to the protection of human participants in research. Jessica knows that these ethical guidelines require informed consent prior to the beginning of research that involves human subjects. She also knows that as part of her service-learning contract with the school, she agreed to accept tasks assigned to her by the supervising teacher. However, she never anticipated that an assigned task might involve deceptive and potentially fraudulent activity, especially in a seventh-grade classroom. Jessica does not want to defy the supervising teacher, nor does she want the student to have to withdraw his project from the competition. But she is very uncomfortable with signing fake consent forms.

### Step 2: Address Relevant Principles and Gather Information

Jessica’s uneasiness in this situation is a testament to the quality of the research training she received in her biology program. To resolve this issue, Jessica needs to evaluate the relevant ethical principles, the ethical guide-

lines of service-learning, and her role in this situation with respect to the ethics of conducting research.

First, Jessica needs to consider the ethical principles that apply to this case. A primary issue is one of autonomy and respect for people’s rights. The participants in this study were denied the right to be informed of the risks and benefits of the research, but more importantly, they were denied the right to refuse to participate in the research. The teacher now asks Jessica to compound the problem by faking signatures after the fact. This deception affects the integrity of the research, as well as Jessica’s personal sense of integrity. Jessica is also faced with the potential legal issues involved in forging signatures.

Jessica does not want to defy the teacher’s instructions. She is, after all, a guest in this teacher’s classroom. However, she cannot bring herself to ignore the potential legal and ethical implications of the teacher’s directive. As she is unsure of which course of action to follow, Jessica’s next step is to seek supervision.

Who can help Jessica with this situation? The most logical choice is her course instructor. The instructor and Jessica could together brainstorm possible solutions. Jessica finds herself in this unexpected situation because of the course’s service-learning assignment. Clearly, the faculty has prepared Jessica in the ethics of conducting research, because she readily recognized the issues involved. In planning a service-learning experience, instructors need to consider the wide range of consequences that community involvement may produce, though this one would have been very difficult to predict.

The service-learning reflection papers would be a good tool to use for contemplating the issues. The reflection exercises may help Jessica identify, clarify, and analyze her reactions as well as the ethical and legal issues involved. Jessica continues to ponder the teacher’s statement, “It’s only a seventh-grade science fair project.” She questions the point at which the ethical standards of research apply. Is it really appropriate to expect seventh-graders to be trained in the ethical conduct of research? Yet the guidelines provided for the regional competition require compliance with the highest ethical standards for research. Jessica’s dilemma might present an excellent opportunity for class discussion and additional input from classmates.

### Step 3: Propose Courses of Action

The next step in the process of ethical decision-making would give Jessica the opportunity to explore the range of available options:

- *Action A:* Comply with the teacher's directive to fake the signatures on the informed consent form, but explain to the student that this action is unethical.
- *Action B:* Confront the teacher directly with her concerns.
- *Action C:* Refuse to comply with the teacher's directive.
- *Action D:* Request that the college instructor intervene.
- *Action E:* Ask participants to complete the informed consent forms after the fact.

### Step 4: Determine and Analyze the Consequences for Each Proposed Course of Action

*Action A:* Comply with the teacher's directive to fake the signatures on the informed consent form, but explain to the student that this action is unethical.

*Positive:* This may be the easiest solution, because Jessica's compliance will ensure that she is able to maintain a positive relationship with the supervising teacher and be able to complete the rest of her service-learning requirement without conflict. The seventh-grade student will also be able to enter his project in the county competition, and Jessica will be satisfied that she has explained to the student that this is not the proper way to conduct research.

*Negative:* The negative consequence is that Jessica must then deal with the damage to her own integrity and the potential legal issues involved in the faking of signatures. As a student, she has a *responsibility to adhere to the policies and procedures of the agency* (SLC I.3), and such policies may require her to report any suspected fraud to the principal. Telling the student that this is not the proper way to conduct research may cause the student to lose respect for his teacher and compromise the teacher's ability to be effective in the classroom. The student may take from this experience

the idea that the end justifies the means and that unethical behavior is acceptable if it resolves the problem in his favor.

*Action B:* Confront the teacher directly with her concerns.

*Positive:* After consulting with her college instructor, Jessica may decide to confront the teacher directly with her concerns about faking signatures. The supervising teacher may not have realized all of the implications of her initial decision. If an open and honest discussion occurs in an atmosphere of mutual respect, the teacher may agree with Jessica's concerns. As a consequence, the seventh-grade student would have to be told that he could not enter his project into the competition. The student could learn a powerful lesson about the ethical conduct of research. It could be an opportunity for Jessica to learn to be diplomatic, yet assertive, when confronting a supervisor.

*Negative:* While an honest confrontation would be the most direct intervention, a negative consequence might be the unintended embarrassment and/or alienation of the supervising teacher. This may strain the relationship between Jessica and the teacher and make it difficult for Jessica to complete her service-learning requirement. If the teacher does agree with Jessica's assessment of the situation, it also means that the seventh-grade student must be told that he cannot enter his project into the research competition. This will undoubtedly result in great disappointment, as he is very excited that he was chosen for the next round of competition. The student may experience feelings of mistrust toward his teacher and begin to question the rules, directions, and advice she provides. Another unintended consequence might be a hostile reaction from the student's parents if they are not tactfully informed of the reasons for the decision. If the teacher does not agree with Jessica's assessment of the situation, she may again direct Jessica to fake the informed-consent form despite her ethical objections. Jessica would then be faced with another difficult decision.

*Action C:* Refuse to comply with the teacher's directive.

*Positive:* If Jessica simply refuses to comply with the teacher's directive without any direct discussion of the issues involved, she is cleared of responsibility and her ethical dilemma is resolved.

*Negative:* While Jessica's refusal to comply may remove her from the situation and from any ethical responsibility, it will probably result in a

negative reaction from the supervising teacher and a potentially antagonistic relationship. This may impact Jessica's ability to complete the rest of her service-learning requirements. It may also result in a strained or ruptured relationship with the community school. Students in service-learning situations are not acting as independent agents. Instead, they must *behave as professional representatives of the collegeluniversity at all times* (SLC 1.1). This can be a difficult lesson to learn. An academic service-learning experience is an excellent opportunity for students to develop an understanding of the broader implications of their choices and behaviors.

Another negative consequence of this course of action might be that the supervising teacher then fakes the signatures on the informed consent form and never really understands the ethical and legal implications of her decision. It is possible that this teacher has not been trained in the ethics of research and the opportunity to educate her will be lost. One of the advantages of the service-learning experience is that both the community agency (or school) and the student involved in the experience will derive equivalent benefits. This is clearly a situation in which the student may take on the role of teacher/advisor/consultant and share her knowledge and expertise in the ethics of research with the supervising teacher. If the teacher does decide to fake the signatures, and Jessica becomes aware of the situation, she would again be faced with a decision to inform the principal or remain silent.

*Action D:* Request that the college instructor intervene.

*Positive:* Intervention by the college instructor takes the responsibility for the situation away from Jessica. Thus, she is not placed in the situation of having to confront a supervising teacher and then deal with the potentially negative reactions by herself. SLC II.2 recognizes faculty responsibility to *minimize potential harm to agencies, their constituents, and students*. The college instructor's intervention would allow the inevitable discussion of research ethics to occur between professionals of comparable status.

*Negative:* A negative consequence of this course of action involves Jessica personally. While it might be appropriate for the college instructor to intervene, Jessica is denied the opportunity to practice asserting her position with a supervisor and clearly articulating and defending her moral/ethical/legal convictions regarding this situation.

*Action E:* Ask participants to complete the informed consent form after the fact.

*Positive:* Because the study was testing the effects of whitening toothpaste by photographing teeth during the project, it might be safe to assume that the participants and their guardians had given implied consent. Asking the participants to sign an informed consent form after the fact might be an acceptable option. It would provide a learning opportunity for the student researcher and the participants. The student would be able to comply with the county regulations and enter his project in the contest.

*Negative:* Because the informed consent was not properly administered, the actual purpose of informed consent is negated. Participants were not told ahead of time of any risks associated with the study; that they could withdraw at any time, and that their participation was strictly voluntary. This option might also leave students with the impression that obtaining informed consent after the fact is an acceptable research practice.

### Step 5: Decide on the Best Course of Action

While none of the proposed courses of action presents an ideal solution to this dilemma, Jessica's best course of action appears to be Action B. Through this choice of action, she is able to maintain her service-learning agreement to *abide by any applicable legal and ethical guidelines* (SLC I.6) and to *behave as a professional representative of the collegeluniversity at all times* (SLC I.1). The act of confronting the supervising teacher alone does not resolve the situation, but it does provide the opportunity for more dialogue with the supervising teacher about the complicated issues involved. Ideally, Jessica and the supervising teacher will be able to discuss the situation in depth with the seventh-grade student and his parents. Jessica also learns to tactfully confront a supervisor and clearly state her position. This is a situation where the student may take on the role of teacher/advisor/consultant and share her knowledge and expertise in the ethics of research with the supervising teacher. She has used the process of consultation to help clarify her responsibilities and both she and the college instructor have learned a valuable lesson about expecting

the unexpected in service-learning situations. One of the advantages of the service-learning experience is that everyone involved in the experience derives equivalent benefits.

### Step 6: Evaluate and Reflect on the Decision

Jessica's decision to confront the teacher directly with her concerns was not an easy decision, nor did it fully resolve the situation involving the seventh-grade student's research project. It is an example of how the best course of action in a complicated situation may only be the first step in the process of finding a solution. A complete resolution would require the involvement of the seventh-grade student, his parents, the supervising teacher, Jessica, and possibly the school principal. It is not an easy decision, because it would probably necessitate an admission from the supervising teacher that she was unaware of the guidelines for conducting research with human participants, and more specifically that she was unaware of the rules of the county competition. It might also mean that the seventh-grade student would not be able to enter his project into the county competition. Clearly, Jessica's action affects others. It illustrates the principle of nonmaleficence, where even the best course of action may have some negative effects.

Using the pillow rest to evaluate her decision, Jessica has some sleepless nights as she thinks of the effects on the supervising teacher and the seventh-grade student. However, she believes that the newspaper rest validates her decision. She would not want the local newspaper to print a lead story about how she forged the signatures of research participants. Using the child rest, Jessica is comfortable that because "it's only a seventh-grade science fair project," it is exactly the right time to stress the ethics of research and to teach a child that the end may not always justify the means.

#### Related Issues

The complicated situation presented in this case highlights the need for continuous discussion of ethics and ethical principles. The ethical principles presented in Chapter 1 are not mutually exclusive, nor are they presented in a hierarchical fashion. Each ethical dilemma must be considered with respect to all the principles and their interrelatedness. The overriding principle in one situation might not take precedence in another. In this

case, the principles of nonmaleficence and integrity are paramount, but Jessica is probably violating the principle of fidelity by challenging the teacher's instructions. The best decision often involves a solution that considers the interests and well-being of others as having as much importance as one's own well-being.

This case raises issues about ethics in research, when and where the ethics in research are taught, and the responsibility of colleges and universities to provide instruction in ethics to elementary science teachers. These teachers may be well trained in elementary teaching techniques but less well prepared in science research methodology. The case also raises questions about the community school's responsibility to provide in-service training to its teachers on issues related to ethical teaching practices.

An equally important related issue is the responsibility of school systems (preschool through post-graduate) to foster moral development. Morality in the broadest sense involves values, relationships with others, and judgments about right and wrong (Ehrlich, 2003). Education in the United States is committed to the promotion of democratic values, good judgment, and a strong moral compass. In this scenario there are at least three different parties involved: Jessica, the seventh-grade student, and the supervising teacher. Each of them might be functioning at a different level of moral development. The reasoning process that occurs at each level will affect the decision each party makes. This scenario provides the opportunity for the deliberate consideration of a complex moral and ethical dilemma where informed judgments are translated into sound, responsible action.

#### Additional Dilemma

Tom is a nursing student involved in a service-learning research project through his advanced nursing leadership course. The research involves administering a survey to patients who have been diagnosed with terminal cancer. The survey is also administered to their spouses. The site supervisor, concerned about the size of the sample, suggests that the student go to each hospital room to ask the patients to participate. "In this way," says the supervisor, "it will be easier to get participants to comply." Tom approaches Mrs. Yung, an Asian immigrant, while her husband is away from the unit for treatment. Mrs. Yung agrees to participate in the study,



and tells Tom that her husband would also like to participate, but that he does not know that he has a terminal illness and that she does not want him to know. She tells Tom that in her culture, it would be considered a burden for the patient to have the information about his illness. What should Tom do?

- 1) Identify the ethical dilemma.
- 2) Why is it an ethical dilemma? Identify the relevant codes.
- 3) Identify and list information you think would be helpful in making a decision.
- 4) List at least three possible solutions to this dilemma.
- 5) Which of the proposed solutions would you choose?
- 6) Why would you choose this solution?
- 7) How would you evaluate whether this is a good solution?

## Chapter Seven

### Treating Service Recipients With Respect and

### Understanding Assignment Limitations

**N**athan is a first-year nursing major who has registered for an elective course, “Contemporary Religions.” The theology course has a service-learning course component in which students interview residents of a local nursing home to develop an oral history of their faith journeys. In partial completion of his assignment, Nathan is required to spend at least 20 hours interviewing and socializing with one resident throughout the semester. Nathan has developed a close relationship with his resident partner and often spends several hours each weekend with him. On one of these weekend visits, the resident’s daughter is also visiting. As she is leaving, she pulls Nathan aside and whispers, “My dad loves candy, but you know that he’s diabetic and shouldn’t have any sweets. Please don’t give him candy if he asks.” Nathan is surprised, because although he is a nursing major and has been studying the effects of diabetes, he had never considered the fact that his resident might have any serious dietary restrictions. Nathan has seen the resident munching on candy bars in his room on several occasions, and he has observed the resident asking other residents to get him a regular (not diet) cola from the vending machine.

Later in the semester, after spending several pleasant hours together, Nathan is about to leave for the day when the resident asks him to retrieve a small paper bag from his dresser. Nathan complies with the request, but as he grabs the bag, it opens and the contents spill out. The bag is full of chocolate candy bars that the resident has hidden. Nathan remembers the daughter’s admonition. Is there an ethical dilemma in this situation? What should Nathan do?

### Step 1: Identify and Define the Dilemma

Nathan is faced with a difficult decision. He has a good relationship with this resident and respects the man's opinions. Although Nathan is spending time in the nursing home because of a service-learning requirement in a theology class, his nursing classes have given him an elementary understanding of diabetes and the medical complications that can occur with this disease. The resident is waiting for the candy and Nathan has only an instant to make a decision. He feels conflicted over his desire to *treat service recipients in a manner consistent with ethical principles (SLC 1.4)* and the sudden realization that *students in service learning shall understand their role and its limitations in the context of the service-learning assignment (SLC 1.2) and abide by applicable legal and ethical guidelines (SLC 1.6)*. Nathan feels ill-equipped to handle this situation. He questions whether he, as a student in a theology class who has developed a friendship with this resident, has the legal, ethical, or moral responsibility to deny the man his bag of candy. He wonders if the resident actually does have dietary restrictions, given his own observations of the resident eating candy and drinking cola. Nathan also wonders what will happen to the man if he truly is diabetic and he consumes a large quantity of candy bars. Nathan clearly does not know the limits of his duties and responsibilities in this situation. In the few moments he has to make a decision, he realizes that he is acting as a representative of the college. He wonders if he can ignore his own understanding of the physical effects of a serious medical condition and still act as a responsible nursing student. Is it ethically permissible to give the man the candy knowing that there could be serious health consequences? But can he deny this man the right to make his own choices, even if they are potentially harmful? Does Nathan become an accomplice in this resident's unhealthy choices if he hands the man the bag of candy?

### Step 2: Address Relevant Principles and Gather Information

Timing is an important issue in this case. Nathan doesn't have a lot of time to gather information. Yet he does have options.

As mentioned earlier, a relevant ethical principle in this case involves autonomy and respect for people's rights. Although the resident lives in a nursing home, he is not cognitively incapacitated, nor has he been identified

as incompetent to make his own decisions. He is an 85-year-old man who is physically handicapped from a stroke but not mentally debilitated. He resides in the nursing home because of his compromised physical condition. The ethical principle of autonomy requires acknowledging that this man continues to have the cognitive capacity to choose his own destiny—even if it means that he makes poor choices: The resident may be harming his own health, and in doing so may increase the amount of care he requires at the nursing home. While this may not be considered a matter of physical harm to others, it may increase the cost of care for all the residents.

Nathan also realizes that the ethical principle of nonmaleficence applies in this situation. Nathan wants to protect this man from harm, and he does not want to contribute to the man's deteriorating physical health. Nathan is faced with a classic ethical struggle of deciding which ethical principle takes priority.

Unfortunately, Nathan does not have the luxury of time to consult with the theology professor supervising this service-learning project. At best, he can attempt to find and consult with a member of the nursing home staff. But he is still faced with a bag of candy and the resident who is waiting for it.

### Step 3: Propose Courses of Action

In the brief amount of time that he has to consider his options, Nathan considers three alternatives:

- *Action A:* Give the candy to the resident.
- *Action B:* Take the bag of candy to the nurses' station.
- *Action C:* Confront the resident about the candy.

### Step 4: Determine and Analyze the Consequences for Each Proposed Course of Action

*Action A:* Give the candy to the resident.

*Positive:* Nathan can simply hand over the bag of candy and allow the resident to make his own decisions about what, when, and how much to

eat. With this option, Nathan is able to remove himself from the conflict and can justify his action, because he has not obstructed the resident's autonomy in making his own decisions and coping with the consequences of those decisions. Nathan can also justify this decision because he is acting as a service-learning participant in a theology course, not as a nursing student. Nathan will not be compromising his positive relationship with the resident through this action.

*Negative:* The negative consequences of this choice are significant. The resident may experience serious medical complications from consuming large amounts of sugar. Nathan is likely to experience significant ethical and emotional distress as he considers the potential consequences of his actions.

*Action B:* Take the bag of candy to the nurses' station.

*Positive:* Nathan could choose to take the candy to the nurses' station and completely remove the potentially harmful items from the resident. The resident is then protected from his own poor choices, and Nathan is acting within the ethical standards of his chosen profession.

*Negative:* This action is paternalistic in that Nathan presumes to know what is best for the resident and denies the resident the right to make autonomous choices. It is likely that Nathan's relationship with the resident will suffer as a result of this decision.

*Action C:* Confront the resident about the candy.

*Positive:* Nathan can maintain the resident's right to autonomy by addressing the issue directly with the resident. The principle of autonomy requires that an individual has access to the information necessary to make a rational, informed decision. If Nathan chooses to discuss the issue with the resident, he can reconcile his distress about his nursing-student role versus his theology-student role and provide the resident with factual information about the dangers of uncontrolled diabetes.

*Negative:* Nathan may feel less emotional distress if he has a discussion with the resident about the dangers of candy consumption, but the resident may still choose to eat the candy. Thus, the potentially negative consequences of Action A could be repeated because of this decision.

## Step 5: Decide on the Best Course of Action

While none of the proposed courses of action presents an ideal solution to this dilemma, Nathan's best course of action appears to be Action C. Through this choice of action, he is able to maintain his service-learning agreement to *abide by applicable legal and ethical guidelines* (SLC 1.6) and *understand his role and its limitations in the context of the service-learning assignment* (SLC 1.2). The act of confronting the resident does not resolve the situation, but it provides the opportunity for more dialogue between Nathan and the resident. Nathan preserves the resident's right to autonomy. In his discussion with the resident, Nathan could use his knowledge of the negative health effects of diabetes to educate the resident, thus practicing one of the important roles of a nursing student. Nathan could also encourage the resident to give the candy to the nurse himself, thus involving the resident in the decision in a very active way. If Nathan's educational message and his persuasive techniques fail, he might choose to follow up this course of action by handing over the candy to the resident or reporting the candy incident to the nurse on duty.

## Step 6: Evaluate and Reflect on the Decision

Nathan's decision to discuss the situation with the resident directly was not an easy one, nor did it resolve the situation completely. It illustrates the conflict between two ethical principles, autonomy and nonmaleficence, and the SLC, in which even the best course of action may have some negative effects.

Using the pillow test as an evaluation of this decision, Nathan finds himself still distressed because he could not prevent a potentially harmful situation from occurring. He is facing a conflict that he will see time and again in his role as a health care professional. Even under the best of circumstances, individuals make poor choices that are harmful to their health. This may cause some sleepless nights, but Nathan is going to have to resolve this issue, because he will face it again.

Nathan is unsure if he would like to see his decision on the front page of the newspaper. Using the newspaper test, Nathan realizes that he judges himself as not having done enough in this situation, and feels that he would be negatively judged by others as well. Using the child test, Nathan

is again uncomfortable with his decision, because he would have preferred the decision to be more straightforward. He would have appreciated a clearer right-versus-wrong distinction if he had to explain it to a child.

#### Related Issues

In this situation, it is possible that Nathan could change his mind about his decision after consulting with his professor. Whatever was decided in this case may not have been ideal, but one must rely on the resources at hand when faced with having to make a decision on the spot. Nathan might have to return to the nursing home and address the issue again with the resident and the medical staff. Being confronted with having to right an apparent wrong is an uncomfortable situation for anyone, but the role of student provides the opportunity to practice living according to one's moral and ethical convictions. It is also important for students to realize that faculty and supervisors are generally forgiving when mistakes are openly addressed and shortcomings readily admitted.

The level of personal discomfort Nathan experiences as a result of this situation is an important related issue. With good supervision, Nathan may come to appreciate that he will face many similar dilemmas in his role as a health care provider. If this situation is not resolved in a manner that preserves Nathan's confidence and dignity, then his desire to participate in future service-learning activities may decline.

#### Additional Dilemma

Jane, an honor student and second-year physics major, is enrolled in a "Perspectives in Education" course. She decides to take the class to satisfy a general education elective and to help her decide if teaching could be in her future. She believes this course will give her the experience and knowledge she needs to make an informed decision about changing her major to education.

As part of the requirement for the course, students become pen pals with elementary students at two local schools. Jane has developed a writing relationship with Sarah, a third grader. Sarah confides in Jane that her mother leaves her and her younger sister alone for periods of time, particularly at night. Sarah writes that she really loves her mother and does not want to hurt her, but is upset that she is solely responsible for her sister during these times and that sometimes it is "pretty scary at night."

Jane is not quite sure what to do with this information. If she tells her instructor, she believes she will violate the relationship she has developed with the child. With her limited understanding of child endangerment, Jane is unsure whether this is really a problem or not. How should Jane proceed? What are her responsibilities to Sarah?

- 1) Identify the ethical dilemma.
- 2) Why is it an ethical dilemma? Identify the relevant codes.
- 3) Identify and list information you think would be helpful in making a decision.
- 4) List at least three possible solutions to this dilemma.
- 5) Which of the proposed solutions would you choose?
- 6) Why would you choose this solution?
- 7) How would you evaluate whether this is a good solution?

## Service-Learning Requirement Places Psychological Burden on Student

In the sociology department at a large comprehensive university, students who major in sociology can select a track in criminology. One of the required courses in that track is called "Corrections." The course provides a broad overview of the American correctional system, with an emphasis on incarceration facilities. For the past five years the professor has incorporated a service-learning component into the course, and students have responded positively. Prior to the introduction of the course's service-learning assignment, the faculty curriculum committee passed a resolution stating that required courses (i.e., those that all students must take to fulfill degree requirements) can include a mandatory service-learning component, as long as this aspect of the course is indicated in the course description in the college catalog.

The "Corrections" course, with the emphasis on the service-learning component, is promoted on the department web site and in the "Sociology Majors' Handbook," an annual publication distributed to all sociology majors. The web site and the handbook include a listing of the types of projects previous students have conducted in the course. Typically, the students develop and implement a therapeutic or educational program for a group of inmates. The professor works with the local prisons before the course begins to determine which group of offenders will be served by the project and outlines the general parameters of the project.

For the current semester, the professor establishes a service-learning project in which the students must develop an exercise program to benefit

juvenile sex offenders at the county prison. The prison warden believes that the program will be beneficial to the inmates' rehabilitation.

Kristen is a senior sociology major who is completing the criminal justice track and must complete this course during the current semester in order to graduate with her desired degree. A classmate raped Kristen when she was 16 years old. Kristen successfully brought charges against this individual, who was incarcerated for a short time in a facility in Kristen's hometown that is similar to the service-learning site. After the rape, Kristen underwent therapy, although she is still recovering from the trauma. She has not revealed information about the rape or its aftermath to anyone at college, because she believes that she would be stigmatized if peers knew she had been a rape survivor.

On the first day of class the professor reviews the syllabus and describes the service-learning project to the students. Although Kristen was aware that she would have to do a service-learning project and had reviewed the material describing previous projects, none of the previous projects involved juvenile sex offenders. Thus, she never thought she would be working with this population to complete a course assignment. She is terrified that she will not be able to interact with the inmates in a professional manner or handle the strong emotions she will experience. Just thinking about this project brings back the troubling memories of her own trauma and she becomes visibly distressed. Following class, Kristen anguishes over her possible courses of action. She is extremely reluctant to discuss this matter with her professor, especially since he is male. She is frightened of how he might react and knows that speaking with him about this will be very traumatic for her. Yet she knows if she does not say something, she will have to complete the service-learning requirement. What should Kristen do?

### Step 1: Identify and Define the Dilemma

If she does not speak up, Kristen could violate several principles in the student SLC. One of these is to *recognize and reflect upon potential challenges to her personal value system* (SLC 1.7). Although Kristen is trying to weigh her alternatives cautiously, failure to discuss these concerns with the faculty member seems to violate SLC 1.8, which mandates that students *carefully consider all aspects of the service-learning assignment and consult with*

*faculty members if participation would cause undue distress due to personal circumstances.* If Kristen does not say anything, she will have to participate in the service-learning project. It may be very difficult for her to complete the project in a way consistent with SLC 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, and 1.6. If she cannot interact in an appropriate way with the inmates, she will not *adhere to the policies and procedures of the community agency* (SLC 1.3), *treat service recipients in a manner consistent with ethical principles* (SLC 1.4), and will violate ethical guidelines (SLC 1.6). If she avoids interaction with the inmates or in other ways sidesteps her responsibilities with regard to the project, she will not *fulfill her service-learning commitment to the agency in accordance with the course requirements* (SLC 1.5).

If Kristen chooses to tell the professor, she will fulfill her responsibility to *carefully consider all aspects of the service-learning assignment and consult with faculty members if participation would cause undue distress due to personal circumstances* (SLC 1.8). However, the telling itself may cause undue stress, hence the ethical dilemma and the conflict reside in what will cause the greater stress—going through with the project and remaining silent, or having to share her rape with the professor. Even if Kristen does decide to tell the professor, she is not sure how she expects the professor to resolve the problem. If he exempts her from the project, she will not *fulfill her service-learning commitment to the agency in accordance with the course requirements* (SLC 1.5). By not doing the project, she will not have the opportunity to *recognize and reflect upon potential challenges to her personal value system* (SLC 1.7). How should this dilemma be resolved?

### Step 2: Address Relevant Principles and Gather Information

Autonomy and respect for people's rights seems the most relevant principle to apply to this dilemma. According to this principle, Kristen should be allowed to choose her own course of action and thereby have some say in the choice of the service-learning project. This is a laudable solution that would be consistent with the principle of autonomy. However, it would be impractical for a professor of a large class to fully accommodate each student's needs and preferences. The best a professor might do is provide a set of different service-learning projects from which students can choose. The integrity principle requires honesty and the avoidance of deception. Thus Kristen would violate this principle if she chooses not to

discuss her reservations with the professor. However, if telling the professor results in Kristen's exemption from the service-learning requirement, then she might not fulfill her course responsibilities, which would be at odds with the fidelity/responsibility principle. This principle also might be put to the test if Kristen attempts but fails to carry out the requirements of the service-learning project in an appropriate manner.

With regard to gathering information, Kristen speaks to her mother and sends an email to her professor requesting more information. She also familiarizes herself with the college policies governing service-learning. Kristen's mother sympathizes with Kristen's dilemma. She asks Kristen whether she should call the professor and speak to him on Kristen's behalf. Kristen's mother feels very strongly that Kristen should not be required to do the service-learning project and asks if there are other college personnel such as the counselor or academic support staff who could intervene on her behalf. Kristen appreciates her mother's willingness to try to take care of the problem for Kristen, but she also feels that it is inappropriate for her mother to do this for her. The response from the professor to Kristen's email essentially reiterates what was on the syllabus and what he said in class. Kristen realizes that the project will involve a significant amount of time interacting with the inmates at the prison. She is now more anxious than ever about participating in the service-learning project. Her perusal of the school's service-learning policy confirms her professor's statement that this project is required for her desired criminal justice track in sociology.

### Step 3: Propose Courses of Action

Kristen considers three possible courses of action:

- *Action A:* Say nothing to the professor and complete the service-learning project to the best of her ability.
- *Action B:* Speak to the professor and request an alternative assignment.
- *Action C:* Ask her mother to speak to the professor on her behalf.

### Step 4: Determine and Analyze the Consequences for Each Proposed Course of Action

*Action A:* Say nothing to the professor and complete the service-learning project to the best of her ability.

*Positive.* By choosing this course of action, Kristen will not subject herself to the stress she knows she will experience if she has to discuss her rape with her professor. Also, this will allow Kristen to continue to abide by her decision not to reveal her rape to anyone. She feels that this decision has helped with her recovery. Further, by forcing herself to do the service-learning project, Kristen can face some of her fears, reflect on the challenges the project will inevitably present for her, and perhaps facilitate recovery from her victimization. Kristen is likely to gain a feeling of confidence and personal strength if she successfully completes the project.

*Negative.* Although this course of action will avoid the stress of having to reveal her rape to her professor, Kristen may be subjecting herself to even greater stress by participating in the service-learning project. Further, she may find herself reacting to the inmates in a way that is inappropriate. This could cause problems for all involved: herself, the inmates she interacts with, the other students, the warden, and the professor. She may find herself in the position of having to explain her actions to her professor, an explanation that may require telling him about the rape after all.

*Action B:* Speak to the professor and request an alternative assignment.

*Positive.* By speaking to the professor, Kristen is recognizing her personal experiences that may interfere with her ability to carry out the service-learning requirements of the course, consistent with the code (SLC 1.8). She is empowering herself to acknowledge that she has nothing to be ashamed of. She should expect that the professor will react in a professional and supportive manner, so that there will be no negative repercussions on future interactions as a result of the conversation. By discussing the situation, Kristen and the professor should be able to arrive at a solution that addresses Kristen's concerns and allows her to participate in this service-learning activity or an alternative in order to fulfill course requirements. This conversation and resulting action will be an important learning experience for the professor, who will be more aware of how certain service-learning activities can be problematic for some students.

*Negative.* By telling the professor about her rape, Kristen is subjecting herself to a great deal of anxiety. Kristen will likely be embarrassed and even ashamed to share this information with him, especially since he is a male professor. Even if Kristen does tell him about the rape and they arrive at an acceptable solution, this may not end Kristen's distress, as she may continue to feel uncomfortable in the professor's presence. She must entertain the possibility that he may view her differently, which may have a negative impact on their relationship. All of these repercussions have a high likelihood of hurting Kristen's academic performance in the class. Finally, the professor may not view Kristen's situation as serious enough to warrant any change in the service-learning requirements. Thus, Kristen will have to do the project in spite of her trauma, so the stress and potentially negative consequences of sharing this information with her professor could be for naught.

*Action C:* Ask her mother to speak to the professor on her behalf.

*Positive.* By asking her mother to speak to the professor on her behalf, Kristen is able to avoid the stress of having to reveal the rape directly to her professor. Further, she probably will not have to do the service-learning project, and thus will avoid that distress and any difficulties resulting from inappropriate behavior while conducting the service-learning project. Since there would be no direct conversation between Kristen and her professor, it will be easier to continue to interact with him without feeling embarrassed or ashamed. Her class performance is not as likely to be affected as if she had told the professor directly.

*Negative.* By having her mother speak on her behalf, Kristen may be viewed by the professor as not acting as a responsible adult. The professor may feel offended that Kristen did not think she could tell him directly. This situation eliminates the possibility for personal growth that might result if Kristen told the professor herself. This course of action also has the same potentially negative consequences of Action B, in that the professor may still treat Kristen differently as a result of knowing about the rape, and she may feel very uncomfortable in his presence. Both of these factors could negatively impact her academic performance. And again, the professor still may decide not to excuse Kristen from the service-learning requirement.

### Step 5: Decide on the Best Course of Action

Kristen decides to take Action B: speak to the professor and request an alternative assignment to the service-learning project.

### Step 6: Evaluate and Reflect on the Decision

Action B is a difficult step for Kristen to take, but it seems to be the best course of action. Although it will be difficult for her to speak about the rape to her professor, Kristen knows that this will be an important step forward in her own recovery. By finally sharing this crime with someone outside her immediate family, Kristen will be acknowledging to herself that she is blameless and should not feel ashamed that this happened to her. Kristen views this action as a reflection of her ability to act as an adult and to resolve problems herself, even if the required actions are personally challenging.

Kristen and the professor can together decide on the best service-learning project. Even if they agree that Kristen should attempt to do the project that involves the juvenile offenders, a backup plan can be implemented if that proves too difficult and problems arise—either in terms of Kristen's own well-being or her behavior when interacting with the offenders. Conversely, if Kristen and the professor decide that it would be best to do an alternative service-learning project, they can work out a plan that is mutually acceptable and will be a positive and rewarding experience for Kristen.

Using the pillow test, this decision seems to be the appropriate course of action. Although Kristen will inevitably worry about her conversation with the professor, both before and after its occurrence, she will sleep better than if she said nothing and attempted the service-learning project. The stress of having to work directly with the juvenile offenders and potentially relive the rape in her mind would presumably be much greater and could be very harmful to Kristen's well-being. This would be compounded by her anxiety that she might say or do something that would cause problems. With regard to the newspaper test, Kristen feels that her story of confronting her problems directly would be one she would be proud to read about. Kristen thinks about how her mother and therapist would react to such a story; she decides that they would be very proud of



her and view this step as a sign of strength and healing for Kristen. However, the whole situation is certainly not something Kristen would want to see in the paper, so this is not the best rest. Finally, with regard to the child rest, Kristen believes she will have abided by the maxim, “Honesty is the best policy.” She feels that she would be able to explain and justify her decision and actions to a child.

#### Related Issues

What action should the professor take if Kristen decides to approach him with her concerns? If he exempts Kristen from doing this project, how should that be handled? Other students might wonder why Kristen is not required to do the project. This action may single Kristen out in a way that will make her the focus of the other students’ attention. This might create a situation similar to the one that Kristen is trying to avoid. If the professor does not exempt Kristen from the project, he is subjecting her to a situation that might be harmful to her well-being. Moreover, it could be harmful to the other students, the inmates, and the professor’s relationship with the community. This action could be viewed as a violation of the faculty SLC, which states that faculty must *minimize potential harm to students* (SLC II.2) and *treat all students in a manner consistent with ethical principles* (SLC II.7).

This situation raises the question of whether faculty can require service-learning without exception. When should exceptions be made in light of students’ individual needs and experiences? Which circumstances warrant such exceptions and which do not? As is the case in this hypothetical dilemma, a student in a different situation may be very reluctant to reveal the specifics regarding those circumstances. Is an explanation required if a student approaches a faculty member and states that there has been a stressful event in the student’s life that should exempt him or her from the service-learning project? Would a professor’s demand for a more complete explanation be an intrusion on a student’s privacy?

#### Additional Dilemma

Rob is an African-American student at a small college that lacks ethnic diversity. He is from a large Midwestern city and grew up in a predominantly African-American neighborhood that is impoverished and crime-ridden. Although Rob never engaged in any significant criminal activity,

the police in his neighborhood have targeted him occasionally with minor physical and verbal harassment. Further, Rob witnessed two police officers using excessive, unjustified force on one of his friends. The injuries that resulted from the assault required hospitalization.

In one of Rob’s chemistry courses, “The Chemistry of Addiction,” students participate in a service-learning project that entails working with teams of students and police officers to present the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program at the local high school. Given Rob’s past experiences with police, he is extremely reluctant to participate in this project. He firmly believes that he will not be treated with respect by the police because the college town is not ethnically diverse, and he is worried about what the police officers might do while he is present. He is also worried that he might behave in a way that will be viewed as inappropriate by the police. This could get him in trouble and thus have negative repercussions on his class performance. However, he is afraid to bring these concerns to the professor because he is not sure how she will react. What should Rob do?

- 1) Identify the ethical dilemma.
- 2) Why is it an ethical dilemma? Identify the relevant codes.
- 3) Identify and list information you think would be helpful in making a decision.
- 4) List at least three possible solutions to this dilemma.
- 5) Which of the proposed solutions would you choose?

6) Why would you choose this solution?

7) How would you evaluate whether this is a good solution?