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## Book Review 3

Reamer, F. G. (2024). Social work values and ethics (6th ed.). Columbia University Press.

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Chances are, if you have been or are presently a practicing social worker in any sized system that encompasses various roles and tasks, you have encountered at least one ethical dilemma. Perhaps in your role as a child welfare social worker, you have been working with a particular family who is trying to regain custody of their young children. The parents have been steadily improving their parenting skills and have shown tremendous fortitude in following the treatment plan that you both carefully laid out. They are close to regaining custody of the children when you receive an anonymous call claiming that the father of the children was accused over 10 years ago of selling child pornography in another state. You investigate the charges and find that although he was not convicted, he had failed to report these charges during the family assessment. What should you do? How should you proceed after you find that the allegation is true? Reamer provides a process for that.

In your role as a college professor in a leadership position, you have been assisting a trusted colleague with promotion and tenure, as well as providing mentorship on leadership functions with the hope that the colleague will use these skills to eventually lead your department as program

director. You are taken aback when you learn that this faculty member has been making comments about you to others in your department as well as to administrators stating that you need to retire because you are old and have memory issues. What should you do? Reamer has a process for that.

Reamer's latest issue of *Social Work Values and Ethics* (6th ed.) is an attestation to his mastery of laying the foundation for identifying, categorizing, and processing the most simplistic to the most outrageous ethical dilemmas faced by contemporary social workers in every role and every sized system. This work is thoroughly thought out, providing an overview of ethical concepts and theories expertly woven in with the ever-changing history of society, and subsequent ethical challenges created from the dynamic impact of societal and environmental forces that influence clients to seek social work services.

The contents of his present work on *Social Work Values and Ethics* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) not only reflects Dr. Reamer's academic background in criminology, social science, and social work, but illustrates the depth of his knowledge on the subject matter, having authored over 150 publications (ResearchGate, 2024). Seven of these publications are noted as being "significant publications" to the annals of social work ethics. It is fitting that Dr. Reamer's biography as a "NASW Pioneer" is discussed on the NASW Foundation site, because he is fundamental to the foundation of the NASW Code of Ethics, having among other accolades "chaired the task force that wrote the current *Code of Ethics* implemented by NASW and remains the "chair of the NASW Technology Standards Task Force and continues to serve on the Code of Ethics Revisions Task Force." The site notes that some "Pioneers" are famous in various realms, and Dr. Reamer is certainly one of those rare commodities that is famous among a variety of professionals, having served on committees that have shaped ethical standards for business, bioethics and many aspects of human services, including juvenile justice (National Association of Social Workers Foundation, 2021).

With such a robust history in ethics, education, and reform, it is not surprising that Reamer's current work provides the reader with a history of social work values and ethics, weaving historical, philosophical discourses on

values from Kant (pp. 80, 82, 201) to Levy (p. 39), all the while expertly incorporating real-world case scenarios that highlight the difficulties regularly faced by social work specialists at all levels of practice.

Using typologies of values, specifically the use of “Core Values” (p. 21) to begin the discourse on solving ethical dilemmas, Reamer reminds us that when facing ethical issues, we need to first “know thy self,” taking note of the various values orientations that guide our daily interactions and that should be considered in the framework of solving ethical quandaries.

Of particular interest is Reamer’s discussion about the need for social workers to be clear about professional values because judgements in practice are based on clarity and understanding of values. Reamer maintains that “there is a need to convert conceptually based values that are usually written in abstract language into concrete guidelines for daily practice” (p. 53).

The text is case-driven, providing real-world examples that illustrate ethical dilemmas and the application of ethical principles in various scenarios. It covers a wide range of topics, including boundaries, dual relationships, documentation practices, and risk management, making it a thorough resource for both students and experienced practitioners. Reamer emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in social work practice, addressing the need for antiracist practices and understanding diverse perspectives.

The balance between theoretical frameworks and practical applications makes the book accessible and useful for understanding the complexities of social work ethics. It addresses the rise of technology in service delivery, such as the ethical implications of using online platforms and social media, and related issues of confidentiality and informed consent.

Using the latest *NASW Code of Ethics*, Reamer helps us better understand issues facing many practitioners and provides a framework for solving ethical issues of all kinds. By incorporating history, philosophy, and practice situations, Dr. Reamer has fashioned a very educational and practical book which should be used in all social work ethics courses.

Academics and practitioners have regarded Reamer's expertise in ethics as the foremost primer guiding decision making when faced with ethical dilemmas. The case scenarios provide excellent situations to utilize the decision-making framework helping students and professionals alike to consider their behavior in practice.

Reamer discusses a variety of ethical codes related to various professions and updates to the *NASW Code of Ethics*, ensuring that readers are aware of current standards and practices. An important feature is the incorporation of elements from the legal realm that provide "five distinct sets of requirements and guidelines that are relevant to many ethical dilemmas" (p. 98). Often, practicing social workers do not understand how to work through ethical issues when their professional code conflicts with legal standards, and these guidelines remind us that there is no black and white when it comes to solving ethical dilemmas. Professional social workers must be knowledgeable and proficient in many realms, including law.

It is difficult to discuss any weaknesses of this book. The author is the foremost expert on social work values and ethics and shows his expertise throughout the book. For those of us who have taught in the academy, Frederic Reamer is an icon whose name we have heard numerous times, and whose works were a requirement in our education. In this work, Reamer reminds us to engage in a "continuous cycle of self-reflection about the process" we use to make decisions and act on those decisions. Reamer notes that reflective practitioners are able to recognize ethical issues and are able to critically think them through, adjusting "decision making and risk-management protocols" (p. 262).

All practicing social workers and students must read this book and keep it as a reference that will be utilized on a regular basis at work and in class.

## References

National Association of Social Workers Foundation. (2021). *NASW Pioneers Biography Index*. <https://www.naswfoundation.org/Our-Work/NASW-Social-Work-Pioneers/NASW-Social-Workers-Pioneers-Bio-Index/id/466>.

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