

Principlism

Week 3

Aim

- To get from the Belmont Report to the BACP Code of Ethics
- To describe the concept of 'Principlism'
- To consider its relevance to Counselling ethics
- To draw attention to some tensions

Resources

- BACP Ethical Framework
- http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework/
- Bond, T., 2000. *Standards and ethics for counselling in action*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publishers.
- Jones, G., Cardinal, D., & Hayward, J., 2006. *Moral philosophy in focus; a guide to ethical theory*. London: Hodder Education.
- Panza, C., & Potthast, 2010. *Ethics for dummies*. Indiana: Wiley Publishing.

Ethical Codes, Standards and Regulations

- Developed in reaction to scandal and impropriety
- History of research ethics provides a bleak picture of the treatment of research subjects at the hands of researchers
- Only scandals reach the news – it is imagined that there was many more.

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The Belmont Report

- Purpose of the report is to provide three principles (prescriptive judgments) that will 'assist researchers, subjects, reviewers and interested citizens with an understanding of the ethical issues inherent in HSR'
- Statement consists of 3 parts
 - Distinction between research and medical practice
 - Establishment of 3 ethical principles
 - Remarks regarding application of the principles

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The Belmont Report - Three Ethical Principles

- Principle of respect for persons autonomy
- Principle of beneficence
 - Requires a risk benefit assessment be made
- Principle of justice
 - Fairness in selection of subjects
 - Benefit is denied or burden is imposed

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The Belmont Report

- **Practice**
 - Interventions designed solely to enhance the wellbeing of the patient and that have a reasonable expectation of success
- **Research**
 - An activity designed to test an hypothesis, permit conclusions to be drawn, develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge

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What is a Principle?

- Belmont Report introduced the concept of Principlism into practice ethics

The Belmont Report - Three Ethical Principles

- **Principle of respect for persons**
 - Individual autonomy
 - Protection of individuals with reduced autonomy
- **Principle of beneficence**
 - Requires a risk benefit assessment be made
 - Maximize benefits and minimize harms
- **Principle of justice**
 - Equitable distribution of research costs and benefits

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How to Apply the 3 Principles

- **Autonomy - Informed consent**
 - Information
 - Comprehension
 - Voluntariness
- **Beneficence – determination of the risk and benefits**
 - Peer review – risks are justified
 - Investigator – study design
 - Subject – the determination to participate
- **Justice**
 - Selection of subjects described by the researcher
 - Reviewed during the peer review process
 - Determined to be equitable

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Most significant book

- Beauchamp, Tom L., & Childress, J. F., 2009. *Principles of biomedical ethics*. 6th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 'Principlism'
- Professional practice across most disciplines are in some way a derivative of this structure.

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What is the intention of Principlism

- To put together an ethical practice that can be used by many professionals in their practice
- BACP have drawn up their ethical framework from this concept

So

- From where did the Belmont report and subsequently Beauchampes and Childress get the idea of Principlism?

So what do we mean by morals and ethics?

- Panza and Potthast *Ethics for dummies* ebook ch1
- *The cake and the icing*
- *You can not have icing without having a cake*
- *The cake (the foundation – morals theories)*
- *The icing (the topping – ethical codes)*



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The cake - 'The Good Life'

- Problem – there are many 'good life' cakes:
- Chocolate, cream, sponge, sultana (there are lost of moral theories).
- Which is the best? What would make it the best? Which would best suite the topping?

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Many moral theories

- The complexity can be seen reflected historically in the number of significant moral frameworks which can be described as derived from within a broadly humanistic ideology; each claiming to describe the 'good life'.
- 3 significant for our purpose

Traditionally the most influential 'cakes'

- 1. examples of this could be the **Aristotelian** concept of '**the good life**', as derived from his concept of **eudemonia**, based on **the virtuous agent; (chocolate cake)**

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- 2. For the greatest 'good' of 'Utilitarianism' (sponge cake)

- 3. the Kantian view of the 'good life' enacted through the good will of duty; (fruit cake) There are significant critics why challenge the view that the mental health profession is moral

Problem

- Each of these moral theories put forward a different account of 'the good life', as an 'expression of humanist moral principles' (p.96),
- and have different accounts of what the 'good' itself entails;
- yet each of these principles have very different implications for what this might imply for the individual and how a 'good' society might function.

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Problem

- There is no agreement about moral theory – which is the best cake.
- How can professionals be asked to act morally when there is no agreement as to what 'good' morality means?
- Principlism is a suggestion on how to accommodate this problem

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