

Moving Closer to a Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists:

Progress Report and Draft

by

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Development of a Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists

International Union of Psychological Science

International Association of Applied Psychology

International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology

1. This report was drafted in October 2005. It is based on an invited address presented at the 30th Interamerican Congress of Psychology in Buenos Aires (Argentina), June 26-30, 2005, and a paper presented at a symposium entitled “Cultural implications for a universal declaration of ethical principles” during the 9th European Congress of Psychology in Granada (Spain), July 3-8, 2005.
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- **INTRODUCTION**
- **UPDATE**
- **DRAFT OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS**
- **NOTE**
- **ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR 2005-2006**
- **FINAL REMARKS**
- **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**
- **REFERENCES**

INTRODUCTION

In 2002, the General Assembly of the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS) approved a motion to create an Ad Hoc Joint Committee that would be responsible for developing a universal declaration of ethical principles for psychologists. The initiative involved the IUPsyS, the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP). However, in view of

the nature of the project, a special invitation was extended to the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP) to join the Committee. As the IACCP has accepted the invitation, the project has become a tripartite endeavor.

This article is the second progress report on the development of a universal declaration of ethical principles for psychologists. The first one was published in 2005 (Gauthier, 2005a). It provided information about the nature of the project and its purpose, the membership of the Ad Hoc Joint Committee, and the proposed method for developing a framework that could provide the structure and the components needed to draft a universal declaration of ethical principles for psychologists that would obtain widespread support and be of worldwide value. In addition, it presented the outcomes of various comparative analyses that were conducted to identify a framework for drafting a universal declaration as well as a description of the emerging framework.

The main purpose of this new progress report is to present a brief overview of the work done since the publication of the first progress report and, more importantly, a complete draft of the *Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists*.

UPDATE

Since the publication of the first progress report (Gauthier, 2005a), further work has been conducted to validate the framework to be used for drafting a universal declaration:

- Firstly, the database for conducting comparisons between codes of ethics in psychology was expanded to identify with a greater degree of confidence the *commonalties* in the ethical principles adopted to develop codes of ethics in psychology (Gauthier, 2005b; 2005c). New comparative analyses were made, using the expanded database. These analyses confirmed what had been found earlier (Gauthier, 2003; 2005b) in that they suggested that the ethical principles best capturing the commonalties in codes of ethics in

psychology were respect for the dignity and rights of persons/peoples, caring for others and concern for their welfare, competence, integrity, and professional and scientific responsibility to society. Therefore, in so far as a generic set of principles can be identified, these principles would appear to be the ones to consider for integration into a framework for developing a universal declaration of ethical principles for psychologists. Comparisons using the full database will be presented in a final report as new entries continue to be made.

- Secondly, on the basis of consultations and discussions (including focus-group discussions), the framework proposed earlier (Gauthier, 2003; 2005a) was revised. Two major changes were made: the wording used to describe the first principle was changed from “Respect for the dignity and rights of persons/peoples” to “Respect for the dignity of all human beings” in the hope that it would be more culturally appropriate and, therefore, that it would secure wider support; the second and the third principle (i.e., caring for others and concern for their welfare, competence) were combined into one principle that was labeled “competent caring for the well-being of others” because caring for the well-being of others without competence or competence without caring for the well-being of others did not appear to be ethically desirable or acceptable. The revised proposed framework is presented in Table 1.
- Thirdly, the review of historical documents by Sinclair (2003, 2004, 2005a) was expanded on behalf of the Ad Hoc Joint Committee to identify the “roots” of the ethical principles and values found in the revised framework (2005b; 2005c). Results are summarized in Table 2. They suggest that the principles and values integrated into the revised framework are both universal and timeless. They may be worded somewhat differently across civilizations and throughout centuries. However, the fact of the matter

is that the ethical principles most commonly found in modern codes of ethics in psychology find their roots in Eastern civilizations (e.g., Babylon, India, Persia, Egypt, Japan), in Ancient times (e.g., Greece), and in the development of Western civilizations (e.g., Great Britain, United States). Thus, these results bring additional evidence showing that the revised framework can provide the structure and the components needed to draft a universal declaration of worldwide value and likely to obtain widespread support.

Using the revised framework, a full version of the *Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists* was drafted. The task was completed on June 1st, 2005. This draft was presented for consultation at the 2005 Interamerican Congress of Psychology in Buenos Aires (Argentina) (Gauthier, 2005b), the 2005 European Congress of Psychology in Granada (Spain) (Gauthier, 2005c), and the 2005 Education Leadership Conference of the American Psychological Association in Washington, DC (USA) (Gauthier, 2005d). It was the focus of a group discussion at the Interamerican Congress of Psychology. It is recognized that the comments and suggestions from the psychology community may lead to revisions of this draft of the *Declaration* and, consequently, that other drafts may follow this one.

In its current form, the *Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists* has a preamble followed by four sections, each relating to one of the principles identified in the revised framework. Each section includes a statement outlining the fundamental moral values contained in the principle and a series of articles that relate directly to these moral values.

A copy of the draft of the *Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists* is presented below. The draft describes ethical principles and values for the international psychology community. It provides a shared moral framework that will help to ensure that members of the psychology community recognize that they carry out their activities within a larger social context. They must act with integrity, develop and apply psychological knowledge and skills in a

manner that benefits humanity, and prevent such knowledge and skills from being used to harm or oppress persons or peoples.

**DRAFT OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES
FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS**

PREAMBLE

Ethics is at the core of every discipline. The *Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists* speaks to the common moral framework that guides and inspires psychologists worldwide toward the highest ethical ideals in their professional and scientific work.

Psychologists recognize that they carry out their activities within a larger social context. They recognize that the lives and identities of human beings both individually and collectively are connected across generations, and that there is a reciprocal relationship between human beings and their natural and social environments. Psychologists are committed to placing the welfare of society and its members above the welfare of the discipline and its members. They recognize that adherence to ethical principles in the context of their work contributes to a stable society that enhances the quality of life for all human beings.

The objectives of the *Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists* are to provide: (a) a generic set of moral principles to be used as a template by psychology organizations worldwide to develop and revise their country-specific or region-specific ethical codes and standards; (b) a universal standard against which the psychology community worldwide can assess progress in the ethical and moral relevancy of its codes of ethics; (c) a shared moral framework for representatives of the psychology community to speak with a collective voice on matters of ethical concern; and (d) a common basis for psychology as a discipline to evaluate alleged unethical behavior by its members.

The *Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists* describes those ethical principles that are based on shared human values. It reaffirms the commitment of the psychology community to help build a better world where peace, freedom, responsibility, justice, humanity, and morality prevail. However, it is written in language that is generic rather than prescriptive. It deliberately avoids prescribing specific behaviors or standards of conduct inasmuch as these must be relevant to local culture, customs, beliefs, and laws.

The significance of this contribution depends on the recognition and promotion of the *Universal Declaration* by psychology organizations at national, regional and international levels. Every psychology organization is asked to keep this *Declaration* constantly in mind and, through teaching and education, promote respect for these principles and, through national and international measures, secure their universal recognition and observance.

PRINCIPLE I

Respect for the Dignity of All Human Beings

Respect for the dignity of all human beings is the most fundamental and universally found ethical principle across geographical and cultural boundaries, and across professional disciplines. It provides the philosophical foundation for many of the other ethical principles put forward by professions. Respect for dignity recognizes the inherent worth of all human beings, regardless of perceived or real differences in social status, ethnic origin, gender, capacities, or other such characteristics. This inherent worth means that all human beings are worthy of equal moral consideration.

All human beings, as well as being individuals, are interdependent social beings that are born into, live in, and contribute to the ongoing evolution of cultural communities that help define their identities and give meaning to their lives. The continuity of lives and cultures over time connects people today with the cultures of past generations and the need to nurture future

generations. As such, respect for the dignity and worth of all human beings also includes moral consideration of and respect for cultural communities.

Respect for the dignity and worth of human beings is expressed in different ways in different communities and cultures. It is important to acknowledge and respect such differences. On the other hand, it also is important that all communities and cultures adhere to moral values that respect and protect their members both individually and collectively.

THEREFORE,

Article 1

Psychologists recognize and respect the unique worth and inherent dignity of all human beings.

Article 2

Psychologists recognize and respect the diversity among human beings.

Article 3

Psychologists respect the customs and beliefs of cultures, limited only when a custom or a belief seriously contravenes the principle of respect for the dignity of human beings or causes serious harm to their well-being.

Article 4

Psychologists uphold the value of free and informed consent.

Article 5

Psychologists uphold the value of privacy of individuals, families, groups, and communities.

Article 6

Psychologists uphold the value of confidentiality of personal information.

Article 7

Psychologists uphold the value of fairness and justice in the treatment of others.

PRINCIPLE II

Competent Caring for the Well-Being of Others

Competent caring for the well-being of others involves working for their benefit and, above all, trying to do no harm. It includes maximizing benefits, minimizing potential harm, and offsetting or correcting harm. Competent caring requires the application of knowledge and skills that are appropriate for the nature, and the social and cultural context, of a situation. It also requires the ability to establish interpersonal relationships that enhance potential benefits and reduce potential harms. Another requirement is adequate self-knowledge of how one's values, experiences, culture, and social context might influence one's actions and interpretations.

THEREFORE,

Article 8

Psychologists demonstrate an active concern for the well-being of individuals, families, groups, and communities.

Article 9

Psychologists uphold the value of taking care to do no harm to individuals, families, groups, and communities.

Article 10

Psychologists uphold the value of maximizing benefits and minimizing potential harms to individuals, families, groups, and communities.

Article 11

Psychologists uphold the value of taking responsibility for correcting or offsetting harmful effects that have occurred as a result of their activities.

Article 12

Psychologists uphold the value of developing and maintaining competence.

Article 13

Psychologists uphold the value of self-knowledge regarding how their own values, attitudes, experiences, and social context influence their actions, interpretations, choices, and recommendations.

Article 14

Psychologists recognize and respect the ability of individuals, families, groups, and communities to make decisions for themselves and to care for themselves and each other.

PRINCIPLE III

Integrity

Integrity is vital to the advancement of scientific knowledge and to the maintenance of public confidence in the discipline. Integrity is based on honest, open and accurate communications. It includes recognizing, monitoring, and managing potential biases, multiple relationships, and other conflicts of interest that could result in harm to or exploitation of others.

Complete openness and disclosure of information must be balanced with other ethical considerations, including the need to protect the safety or confidentiality of others, and to respect cultural expectations.

Cultural differences exist regarding appropriate professional boundaries, multiple relationships, and conflicts of interest. However, regardless of such differences, continual monitoring and management are needed to ensure that self-interest does not interfere with acting in the best interests of others.

THEREFORE,

Article 15

Psychologists uphold the value of truthfulness, and honest, accurate and open communications.

Article 16

Psychologists avoid incomplete disclosure of information unless complete disclosure is culturally inappropriate, or violates the confidentiality of others, or carries the potential to do serious harm to individuals, families, groups, or communities.

Article 17

Psychologists uphold the value of maximizing impartiality and minimizing biases.

Article 18

Psychologists uphold the value of not exploiting others for personal, professional, or financial gain.

Article 19

Psychologists avoid conflicts of interest and declare them when such situations cannot be avoided or are inappropriate to avoid.

PRINCIPLE IV

Professional and Scientific Responsibilities to Society

Psychology functions as a discipline within the context of human society. As a science and a profession, it has responsibilities to society. It is expected to increase knowledge of human behavior and people's understanding of themselves and others, and use such knowledge to improve the condition of individuals, families, groups, communities, and society. It also is expected to conduct its affairs within society in accordance with the highest ethical standards. Another expectation involves encouraging the development of social structures and policies that benefit all human beings.

THEREFORE,

Article 20

Psychologists uphold the discipline's responsibility to increase scientific and professional knowledge in ways that promote the well-being of society and all its members, and that are consistent with the other ethical requirements of this *Declaration*.

Article 21

Psychologists uphold the discipline's responsibility to ensure that psychological knowledge is used for beneficial purposes, and to protect such knowledge from being misused, used incompetently, or made useless by others.

Article 22

Psychologists uphold the discipline's responsibility to conduct its affairs in ways that promote the well-being of society and all its members, and that are consistent with the other ethical requirements of this *Declaration*.

Article 23

Psychologists uphold the discipline's responsibility to promote and maintain the highest standards of the discipline.

Article 24

Psychologists uphold the discipline's responsibility to ensure that members are adequately trained in their ethical responsibilities and required competencies.

Article 25

Psychologists uphold the discipline's responsibility to develop its ethical awareness and sensitivity, and to be as self-correcting as possible.

NOTE

The above *Universal Declaration* is only a draft. It is a work in progress. It will be discussed and revised in the light of broad consultations to determine the cultural appropriateness

of the definitions, concepts and language. The Ad Hoc Joint Committee is cognizant of the fact that a universal declaration of ethical principles for psychologists must be *relevant to local communities and indigenous values*, and *sensitive to natural and cultural differences* in order to obtain widespread support and to be of worldwide value.

ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR 2005-2006

As a working group, the Joint Ad Hoc Committee will continue to be very active in the coming year. It will establish a means to keep people informed and to seek feedback and advice from those who live and work in different cultural settings. It will further expand its database for comparisons between codes of ethics in psychology. Finally, it will refine the draft of the *Universal Declaration* in the light of comments and suggestions from the international psychology community.

A final draft of the *Universal Declaration* will be submitted for discussion/approval to the IUPsyS General Assembly, the IAAP Board of Directors, the IACCP Executive Committee during the 26th International Congress of Applied Psychology to be held in Athens, Greece in 2006. In the meantime, the Committee will continue to actively seek advice from psychologists from all over the world in order to arrive at a universal declaration of ethical principles for psychologists that can be endorsed by all major international and national stakeholders in psychology.

FINAL REMARKS

The Committee is aware of the fact that developing a universal declaration of ethical principles for psychologists that is both aspirational and inspirational in its respect for the inherent dignity of all human beings will continue to be a challenge. It is most encouraging, however, to see that the project continues to receive strong and enthusiastic support from all parts of the world. It is equally encouraging to observe that the draft of the *Declaration* presented

above has been very well received until now. Actually, a couple of national bodies in psychology have already requested a copy of the *Universal Declaration* because they wanted to use it either to develop a code of ethics or to revise an existing one. From our point of view, this confirms the need for *Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists*, which augurs very well for its future.

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Table 1

Revised Proposed Framework for the Development of the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists

<p>Principle 1 <i>Respect for the Dignity of All Human Beings</i></p>	<p>Principle 2 <i>Competent Caring for the Well-Being of Others</i></p>	<p>Principle 3 <i>Integrity</i></p>	<p>Principle 4 <i>Professional and Scientific Responsibility to Society</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for dignity and worthiness of persons/peoples • Non-discrimination • Informed consent (protection) • Free consent (freedom) • Fair treatment/Due process (justice) • Privacy • Confidentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring (health and well-being) • Maximize benefits • Minimize harm • Offset/Correct harm • Competence (responsible caring) • Self-knowledge (responsible caring) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy/Honesty • Objectivity (understanding and managing biases) • Straightforwardness/Openness • Avoidance of incomplete disclosure • Avoidance of conflict of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of knowledge • Respect for society • Duties to society (development of society)

Table 2

*Tracing the Historical Roots of the Ethical Principles and Values in the Revised Proposed Framework for the Development of the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists – Current ethical principles and values as reflected (or * not espoused) in content/excerpts taken from historical documents and codes for physicians*

Document/Code	Ethical Principle/Value			
	<i>Respect for the Dignity of All Human Beings</i> (Inherent/Equal Worth; Consent; Privacy)	<i>Competent Caring for the Well-Being of Others</i> (Do Good/Avoid Harm; Be Competent)	<i>Integrity</i> (Be Truthful; Avoid Conflict of Interest)	<i>Professional and Scientific Responsibility to Society</i> (Contribute to Humanity/Society; Respect For/Accountability To Society)
Code of Hammurabi (Babylon, circa 1795 - 1750 BC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different fees depending on social status (worth).* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punishment if someone is harmed or dies. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgements and punishment concerning physicians are responsibility of courts.
Ayurvedic Instruction (India, circa 300 - 500 BC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No person hated by the king” to be treated.* • Permission to enter house needed. • Household events to be kept confidential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Devote self to doing good for the patient.” • “Do not desert or injure your patient.” • “Act with a view to the acquisition of knowledge.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Speak only the truth.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Seek the good of all living creatures.”
Hippocratic Oath (Greece, circa 400 BC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules apply to all patients, whether free or enslaved. • “Do not divulge . . . in the belief that all such things should be kept secret.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to be of benefit, but at least do no harm. • Stay within limits of competence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Conceal most things from the patient” (to avoid patient becoming worse).* • No sexual involvement, whether with a freeperson or slave. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Stand free from any voluntary criminal action.”

	Ethical Principle/Value			
Hebrew Oath of Asaph the Physician (Unknown, circa 200 - 600 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Do not divulge the secret of a man who has trusted you.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Do not attempt to kill by means of a potion of herbs.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Do not say of good - it is bad; nor of bad - it is good.” 	
Ayurvedic Oath of Initiation (India, circa 400 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Treat . . . all Brahmins, orphans, people who come from a distance . . . as if they are your own friends.” • “Enter family dwelling only after giving notice and with their permission.” • “Never give out to others the practices of the patient’s home.” 			
Haly Abbas’ Advice to a Physician (Persia, circa 950 AD)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A physician should never use or prescribe a harmful drug.” • “A physician must study medical books constantly and never grow tired of research.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A physician is to treat his patients out of good and spiritual motives, not for the sake of gain.” 	
Daily Jewish Prayer of a Physician (Egypt) circa 1150 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In the sufferer, let me see only the human being.” 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Do not allow thirst for profit, ambition for renown and admiration, interfere with my profession.” 	
Seventeen Rules of Enjuin (Japan, circa 1500 AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You should rescue even such patients as you dislike or hate.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You should be delighted if the patient receives medicine from another physician and is cured.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You should not exhibit avarice and you must not strain to become famous.” 	

	Ethical Principle/Value			
<p>Five Commandments and Ten Requirements (China, 1617 AD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Physicians should respond to any calls of patients, high or low, rich or poor. He should treat them all equally.” • “Prostitutes should be treated just like patients from a good family.” • “Mocking should not be indulged, for this brings loss of dignity.” • “The secret diseases of female patients should not be revealed to anybody.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Remedies should be prepared according to the pharmaceutical formulae, but may be altered to suit the patient’s condition.” • “A physician or surgeon must study all the ancient books ceaselessly so that he will not make any mistakes.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Practice medicine with honesty.” • “Practice medicine with integrity. Do not replace precious herbal materials provided by the family with inferior ones.” • “If the case improves, drugs may be sent, but physicians should not visit them again for lewd reward.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Medicine should be given free to the poor. Extra financial help should be extended to destitute patients if possible.”
<p>A Physician’s Ethical Duties (Persia, 1770 AD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A physician must not regard others with contempt.” • “A physician must protect the patient’s secrets and not betray them.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A physician should never recommend any kind of fatal, harmful, or enfeebling drug.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A physician must not hold his students or his patients under his obligation.” 	
<p>(First) American Medical Association Code of Ethics (1847 AD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “None of the privacies of personal and domestic life should ever be divulged except when imperatively required to do so.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Consultations should be promoted in difficult or protracted cases.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Should not fail to give to the friends of the patient timely notice of danger, and even to the patient himself if absolutely necessary.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The public ought no longer to allow statute books to exhibit the anomaly of exacting knowledge from physicians under liability to heavy penalties.”*

	Ethical Principle/Value			
<p>Nuremberg Code of Ethics in Medical Research (1948 AD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential.” (Detailed definition of informed voluntary consent.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Experiment should be conducted so as to avoid all unnecessary physical and mental suffering and injury.” • “Proper preparations should be made to protect the subject against even remote possibilities of injury, disability or death.” • “Be prepared to terminate the experiment at any stage if likely to result in injury or death.” • “Should be conducted only by scientifically qualified persons. The highest degree of skill and care should be required.” • Adequate risk/benefit analysis must be done. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The experiment should be such as to yield fruitful results for the good of society.” • “The duty and responsibility for ascertaining the quality of the consent rests upon each individual who initiates, directs, or engages in the experiment. It is a personal duty and responsibility which may not be delegated to another with impunity.”

Note. From “The roots of ethical principles and values in codes of ethics,” by C. Sinclair, 2005, July, in J. Pettifor (Chair), *Cultural implications for a universal declaration of ethical principle*, symposium conducted at the 9th European Congress of Psychology, Granada, Spain.