

**Instructor's Manual for the  
Society of Indian Psychologist's Commentary on the American Psychological  
Association's (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct**

**Introduction**

The SIP *Commentary on the American Psychological Association's (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (hereafter, *the Commentary*) represents the culmination of a 2-year collaboration between representatives of the APA Ethics Committee and Ethics Office and the Society of Indian Psychologists (SIP). SIP members had had many discussions about the ways in which the *APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (2010) (hereafter, *the Ethics Code*) creates challenges for psychologists trying to practice ethically in Indigenous communities. These concerns resulted in an invitation to APA to attend SIP's annual meeting in 2011. This meeting marked the beginning of a collaboration that continues to the time of this writing.

One of the most significant outcomes of this collaboration grew out of the 2013 SIP meeting in Logan, Utah. Everyone in attendance at that meeting was invited to contribute stories from their experience with the *APA Ethics Code*. This *Commentary* is an assemblage of these stories **and comments from professional members relating the stories to specific ethical guidelines.**

Graduate students in courses on professional ethics will benefit from the opportunity to reflect on the *APA Ethics Code* from the diverse individual and collective experiences of Native psychologists. The following Instructor's Manual provides teachers of psychology graduate courses in professional ethics with suggestions for enhancing their coverage of multicultural issues in the context of ethics with particular emphasis on

the incorporation of issues affecting indigenous professionals, clients, supervisees, research participants, and students.

### **Values Statement (pp. 13-15)**

#### **Overview**

The values imbedded in the Commentary are considered "shared" values common to Indigenous people of the Americas and Hawaii. These values reflect a holistic and inter-relational view of health. Further, healing is considered to be *transpersonal*: it extends beyond the physical person ~~and~~ **applies** to the environment and society of which they are a part. More specifically, these values include:

1. All things are considered sacred ~~and~~ **have spirit**.
2. Life and development are understood in terms of cycles.
3. Everything is connected (people, land, and past, present, and future events).
4. Life events are considered lessons.
5. Respect and honoring are essential to relationships.
6. Social, historical, and political contexts shape the lives, experiences, and perceptions of Indigenous people and are therefore emphasized in healing.
7. Balance and harmony strengthens resiliency.
8. Collaboration is valued over competition.
9. Sustainability is essential for survival, and the impact of one's actions is considered relevant.
10. Mystery, awe, wonder, intuition, and miracles occur in everyday life.
11. Understanding of one's identity and place comes through consideration of past, present, and future within one's community.

12. Consideration of the "Whole" is paramount.

### **Classroom Activities and Discussion Questions**

Organize small groups to discuss one or more of the 12 values described in the "Values Statement." Invite students to consider:

- How are your own values, assumptions, and beliefs reflected in or different from those values?
- Identify one of your own personal values or assumptions that comes from your cultural background. How might this value affect your ethical understanding and approach to clinical work, research, or teaching?
- Consider a time when you believe that you have experienced "harm" in an educational or professional setting as the result of the abuse of power by someone in authority. How was your personal or professional development affected? What have you learned from this experience and how will this experience inform your work when you are in a position of power?
- How do you understand the relationship between values and ethics?
- Consider a time when you may have abused your power to the detriment of another person, or consider how you might inadvertently do so when you are in a position of authority or power in the future.
- What are some strategies or actions that you could employ to minimize the likelihood that you might abuse your power? What fail-safe mechanisms can you develop to guard against such errors.
- Consider the concept of "cultural relevance." How does this inform your understanding of professional ethics?

## **Assignments**

- Reflect on and write about any of the above-listed questions.
- Interview a psychologist whose cultural background differs from your own. Identify three professional values espoused by that individual that reflect his or her culture. Contrast them with your own values, and write about how your work with someone from that culture might be influenced by what you have learned.
- Watch a film or read a piece of fiction by a Native or Indigenous author and featuring characters from that individual's tribe or culture. Consider how the values discussed in the Commentary are reflected in the story and characters.

## **General Principles**

### **Overview**

The APA Ethical Principles include five principles that establish the profession's highest ethical ideals. They are considered *aspirational*, that is, psychologists are encouraged to strive to reach these ideals in their work. The five Principles are listed and they are followed by the comments and stories of SIP members that were brought to mind as they read them.

### **Class Activities and Discussion Topics**

#### **Principle E**

- How might the inclusion of "cultural relevance" and "humility" in the APA Ethical Principles affect the practice of psychology?
- What important concepts would be added to the Ethical Principles by the addition of these two principles?

- Authors of the Commentary overwhelmingly recommended that Principle E be listed as the first Principle because, conceptually, this Principle undergirds all of the others. Discuss your response to this recommendation.
- Review the six comments and seven stories. Reflect on your own experiences as a student, researcher, research participant, client, psychotherapist/clinician, or teacher.
- Do you recall any of your own experiences that are similar to or different from those of the authors?

### **Principle A Beneficence and Nonmaleficence**

- What is your view of the aspirational goal to "do no harm?"
- How does this apply to working with Native communities?

### **Principle B: Fidelity and Responsibility**

- One comment regarding Principle B suggests that other professionals should include "healers or medicine people, spiritual leaders, and elders." How do you understand the role of these individuals within Native communities?

### **Principle C: Integrity**

- How might the concepts of "accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness" be interpreted differently in various cultures?

### **Principle D: Justice**

- What do you believe manuscript reviewers must understand in order to competently review submissions by Native psychologists?
- Should manuscripts related to Native communities be evaluated by at least one Native reviewer?

- If manuscript reviewers generally lack cultural competence, what effect will this have on the building of knowledge in the profession of psychology?
- The author of the second story in this section describes an experience as a supervisee during a doctoral internship. What is your reaction to hearing about this individual's experience?
- With the benefit of this story, how would you have handled a similar situation if you had been the supervisor?
- If consulted in this case, how would you advise the supervisor? How does your own cultural background influence your response?

### **Cultural Relevance**

- How do you view the doctor's response to this individual's request regarding his surgery? How did you feel reading this story?
- How did the principle of cultural relevance inform the two professionals described in these two stories?