

The Development and Teaching of the Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Family Scientists*

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This article describes the development of the Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Family Scientists that the National Council on Family Relations Board of Directors unanimously approved. Furthermore, it discusses the importance of ethics education for family professionals and provides suggestions for educators. Finally, the ethical principles and guidelines are delineated. We argue that the development of a scholarship on ethics education is important for current and future family scientists.

Our society is more pluralistic, faster paced, and more mobile than in the past. Family roles and structures are evolving, and there is deep disagreement on family issues, values, and the definition of “family” itself. Because of the complex, sensitive, and personal nature of the family, family professionals have a distinct relationship with society. Unlike telephone solicitors or used-car salespersons whose motto may be “Let the buyer beware,” family professionals are expected to be trustworthy, competent, and ethical (Arcus, 1999; Keith-Spiegel & Koocher, 1985; Leigh, Lowen, & Lester, 1986).

In the past, when family life was less complex, the sentiment among some family professionals seemed to be that no ethical code was needed. Family scholars, however, have shown that psychoeducational interventions used in family education and enrichments are increasingly popular, potent, and potentially harmful (Brock, 1993; Doherty, Lester, & Leigh, 1986). For example, educators who teach about families can lead students to explore their personal lives in ways that can lead to positive growth and development. At the same time, however, the interaction also can open emotional wounds that are still unhealed. Similarly, therapists who counsel individuals and families and researchers who gather data from individuals and families can have a powerful impact on the emotional welfare of their clients and research participants.

The literature also indicates that university professors who teach the value and emotion-laden content found in family courses have serious ethical obligations and often experience complex ethical dilemmas (Allen & Crosbie-Burnett, 1992; Knaub & Meredith, 1991; Quoss, 1993; Swartzlander, Pace, & Stamler, 1993). For example, a significant unique ethical issue for teachers of family life courses in formal educational settings involves the potentially troubling combination of highly personal and value-laden information and evaluating the work of the student for a grade (Brock, 1993; Lee, Weber, & Knaub, 1994). Many family professionals indicate they find themselves unprepared to adequately respond to the ethical dimensions of the cultural and structural complexities of today’s families (Knaub & Meredith; Quoss). Responding to the growing need for a code of ethics

that would guide the professional conduct of its members, the Family Science Section of the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) undertook the task of developing a code. This article (a) describes the developmental process of the *Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Family Scientists* adopted by NCFR, unanimously approved at the April 1998 board meeting; (b) reviews the literature on ethics education and applies principles from other disciplines to the family science context; and (c) delineates the ethical principles and guidelines themselves (see Appendix A).

The Development of Ethical Principles and Guidelines

The NCFR was founded in 1938 as an informal organization, “a welcomed relief from the big, disciplined, aloof organizations to which most of us belong” (Walters & Jewson, 1988, p. iii). Membership was interdisciplinary and included participants in such areas as law, sociology, religion, home economics, marriage counseling, psychology, medicine, and education.

A constitution was developed, but a code of ethics was not. In retrospect, such a code may not have been needed because the purpose of the organization as defined by the constitution was “to advance the cultural values that are now principally secured through family relations for the advantage of the individual and strength of the nation” (Walters & Jewson, p. 1). The time was not ripe to ask the questions: Which cultural values? What family structure?

The NCFR was not alone in lacking a code of ethics at that time. The American Psychological Association (APA) established an ethics committee in 1938, but an official code was not adopted until 1953 (Keith-Spiegel & Koocher, 1985).

The perception of the NCFR as an informal organization continued into the 1960s, when Jessie Bernard wrote, “[NCFR] is an association of professionals but not a professional association of professionals. . . . Its members come together to think about problems, to teach one another, to learn from one another” (Bernard, 1964, p. 29). Many NCFR members belonged to other professional organizations, such as the APA, the American Sociological Association, and the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Each had its own codes of ethics and served as the primary professional organization for its members.

At the same time Bernard argued that NCFR was not a professional organization, interest in professionalizing it appeared to grow. For example, concern for professional competency regarding teaching about families led to the establishment in 1964 of a committee on Standards and Certification for Family Life Educators. Even though a chapter in the *Handbook of Marriage and the Family* (Kerkoff, 1964) urged the field of family life education to develop a code of ethics, interest focused on other

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issues of professionalization, and no membership code of ethics was addressed (Walters & Jewson, 1988).

In his presidential address at the 1982 NCFR annual meeting, Wesley Burr “struck terror in the hearts of traditionalists in the family field” (Walters & Jewson, 1988, p. 115) by suggesting that the study of family be recognized as a separate discipline, albeit a young discipline. He also suggested that it met five of the seven criteria needed to be considered a unique discipline and should be considered a newly emerging one (Burr & Leigh, 1983). Although response to Burr’s proposal was mixed, many family scholars and practitioners began thinking of themselves as part of an emerging discipline and profession, and the Family Discipline Section (now called the Family Science Section) was formed within NCFR.

At the 1992 NCFR annual meeting, Family Science Section members voted and approved, as a top priority, the development and adaptation of a code of ethics for its membership. Section Chairperson, Kathleen R. Gilbert, appointed Rebecca A. Adams to chair the newly established Ethical Code Committee with David C. Dollahite and Robert E. Keim as committee members.

Through the ensuing year, the committee studied codes of ethics from other professional disciplines and associations, discussed the professional arenas in which Family Science Section members operated, studied the value of a professional code of ethics, and began formulating possible ethical statements for family scientists. As the committee members discussed the developing document, they came to think of it as a “living document” that would be flexible enough to respond to emerging ethical concerns. It also was decided that the document should be considered a set of “ethical principles and guidelines” rather than a “code of ethics” because of the diverse professional activities represented by family scientists and because the document was meant to be educational and sensitizing rather than a legalistic code with enforcement potential.

The initial draft, along with the “living document” concept, met with favorable responses when presented at the section business meeting the following year. To provide for maximum input from all section members, the draft was published in the December 1995 issue of *The NCFR Report* (Adams, Keim, & Dollahite, 1995), and mailed to all section members for feedback. The document was then modified and presented at the 1996 section meeting. Section members were given an additional year for input. The final draft, along with related changes in section bylaws, was then approved as the Family Science Section Ethical Principles and Guidelines by a mail-in vote of the section membership.

While the document was in the review process, committee members and the section chairperson received numerous inquiries about the possibility of NCFR, as a whole, adopting the guidelines. Principal among those was NCFR Executive Director, Mary Jo Czaplewski, who had provided extensive feedback throughout the developmental process. Section members were receptive to the broader application of the guidelines but were concerned about relinquishing control because of concerns about lack of an interested body to periodically revise the document. Therefore, they approved that the section chairperson at that time, Rebecca A. Adams, propose the guidelines to the Board, with the section maintaining some continued responsibility for their ongoing development.

This was done at the April 1997 meeting of the NCFR Board of Directors, and the overall interest of the Board was positive. The guidelines were printed again in the *NCFR Report*

(Adams, Keim, & Dollahite, 1997), and input by the entire NCFR membership was invited. In addition, NCFR Section Chairs were asked to include discussion of the Ethical Principles and Guidelines at their section business meetings at the November 1997 Annual Conference, and the NCFR attorney was asked to review them regarding liability issues. Surprisingly, there were few minor revisions recommended from the general membership, section chairs, and attorney. This suggests the principles and guidelines adequately addressed the kinds of concerns most members felt were important. Following these efforts, including making the minor revisions suggested, the *Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Family Scientists* were unanimously approved at the April 1998 meeting of the NCFR Board of Directors.

The eight ethical principles and 51 specific ethical guidelines are intended to apply to *all* members of NCFR in their roles as family life educators, therapists, researchers, professors, employees of agencies, and citizens of their communities. Of course, NCFR members and students who also are members of other professional associations are bound by the ethical codes of those bodies. For example, parent and family educators who obtain the certified family life educator (CFLE) designation from NCFR are expected to abide by 33 Ethical Guidelines for Parent and Family Educators. Less than 20% of the nearly 3,800 members of NCFR are CFLEs, however (personal communication, Dawn Cassidy, CFLE Program Director, May 2000). We encourage the many NCFR members who practice some type of family life education, but who are not CFLEs, to obtain the document titled *Tools for Ethical Thinking and Practice in Family Life Education* from the NCFR office and incorporate those ethical guidelines into their work. (In addition to the Ethical Guidelines for Parent and Family Educators, this booklet contains an excellent discussion on relational ethics, an article on the levels of involvement by William Doherty, a “Case Study Process” that can help educators teach ethics, and a set of Competencies for Family Life Educators created by Weber State University that has ethical implications.)

Implications for Ethics Education

Postmodernism has brought much-needed attention to the importance of recognizing and appreciating variation in family life. An unintended negative consequence of postmodernism is the tendency for some students to wonder whether there are *any* legitimate standards of moral, responsible, or ethical professional behavior—other than to be tolerant of all people’s choices and conditions. Teaching ethical principles and guidelines that ground students in a way of thinking and acting as ethical family professionals can help diminish this unintended consequence.

Garner and Smith (1991) argued that “all who teach are involved in ethics education either by design or by default. Our implicit ethical perspective is shown in countless everyday behaviors and decisions” (p. 11). It appears that the only question is how consciously and effectively we will teach ethics to our students. An important study (Knaub & Meredith, 1991) of ethical issues among 357 family scientists selected from the Family Science, Family Therapy, and Education and Enrichment sections of NCFR provides empirical evidence for the need for both ethical guidelines and for explicit education in ethical behavior. The authors reported that:

1. Seventy-six percent of respondents stated that they had experienced a serious ethical dilemma in their work.
2. Of those in the entire sample who said they had faced a

serious ethical dilemma, only 47% said that their educational preparation had helped them resolve it.

3. Of the family therapists in the sample (who are required to have course work in ethics), 71% said their ethics education helped them resolve the dilemma.

4. Professors and graduate students in nonclinical family programs indicated that they felt poorly prepared to deal with ethical questions.

5. When asked if they believed that family life educators should have a code of ethics, 96% answered yes.

6. Family professionals who had not studied ethics believed that course work in this area would have been helpful.

These data suggest both a fundamental need for better education on ethical principles and guidelines and a strong desire on the part of family life professionals for ethical guidance. Now that a set of ethical principles and guidelines has been adopted by NCFR, it is the responsibility of family professionals who belong to that association to educate and encourage one another, as well as future family scientists, in ethical reasoning and action. This is no small challenge, as Knaub and Meredith (1991) stated:

The need for competent instruction may cause the profession difficulty. As revealed in this study, professors feel ill-prepared to deal with ethical dilemmas; yet, it is professors who must design and teach practical ethics to upcoming family scientists. How will this lack (or perceived lack) of education be corrected? (p. 19)

We present below suggestions on ethics education based on a review of relevant literature. Given the diversity of programs and contexts in which ethics education occurs, the emphasis will be on concepts and principles rather than on specific pedagogical strategies.

Ethics Education: Goals and Principles

The literature on ethics education includes philosophy, theory, and application to various domains (i.e., counseling, education, research). Professional ethics are both highly dependent on the specific professional context in which the work is done, and they are extremely complex and value laden (Craig, 1991; Kitchener, 1986; Knaub & Meredith, 1991; Leigh et al., 1986). Thus, it is not sufficient to ask students to read an article or book about ethics in general or about another professional context, for example, and expect them to be well educated on the ethical principles they should know and the dilemmas that they may face as family professionals. Broad, superficial, or out-of-context discussions of ethics will not adequately prepare students for the complex, value-laden, diverse, and changing professional arenas in which they will work (Craig; Knaub & Meredith). In addition, general discussions are less likely to elicit strong commitments to ethical behavior (Arcus, 1980).

Garner and Smith (1991) stated that "Ethics education has a transdisciplinary quality that makes it everyone's concern and no one's exclusive domain" (p. 10). The good news is that the surge of interest in professional ethics in the 1970s and 1980s produced numerous ethical codes and institutionalized ethics curricula in graduate clinical programs. This means that graduate programs in family therapy likely are comparable to the strong ethics educational curricula in law, medicine, business, and nursing. The bad news is that all of this has not yet resulted in a comprehensive and coherent body of scholarship that can clearly

guide the teaching of professional ethics in the family field to nonclinical family science students.

Thus, despite repeated calls in the last 3 decades of the 20th century for greater attention to ethics among various leaders in the family field, particularly among family life educators (e.g., Brock, 1993; Czaplewski & Jorgensen, 1993; Leigh et al., 1986), and despite the fact that ethics is 1 of 10 "subject areas" of which knowledge is required to become a CFLE, a well-developed literature on ethics education specifically for family professionals is not available. In fact, Margaret Arcus appears to be the only family scholar to have provided a sustained discussion of ethics education relating to family issues (Arcus, 1980, 1984, 1999; Arcus & Daniels, 1993). In her most recent article, Arcus (1999) argued that:

This relative lack of attention to ethics education in the family science literature is an important omission because many who are responsible for this curricular development and implementation in family science programs may have little or no preparation in ethics and ethics education. (p. 50)

The lack of a more vibrant literature on ethics education in family science suggests that family science scholars and educators may not believe that ethics are as important to the preparation of family professionals as is topical content, scholarly methods, and pedagogical methodology. This assumption, if true, has troubling implications for the integrity of the family field and for the way current and future professionals feel about their responsibilities. It implies that those who train others to work with families do not believe strongly in the importance of a coherent, thorough, well-researched, and philosophically defensible approach to teaching ethics. Thus, we believe that the development of a scholarship on ethics education in family science is crucial for the well-being of the field, our students, and those we serve as family professionals.

Next, we draw from this literature as well as from scholarship on ethics education in other helping professions to briefly discuss some of the most useful ideas from this literature with implications for ethics education for family professionals. Those who teach in this area are encouraged to consult these and other sources of ethical guidance.

For a principles-based educational approach. Krager (1985) suggested five principles relating to the development of ethical behavior:

1. *Respect autonomy* by helping others make their own choices.
2. *Do no harm* by avoiding actions that hurt others or place them at risk.
3. *Benefit others* by acting in ways that contribute to the welfare and growth of other individuals and society.
4. *Support fairness and justice* by serving all persons fairly and equally and by disregarding irrelevant factors when treating others.
5. *Maintain fidelity* by keeping promises, being honest, and maintaining commitments.

Brock (1993) summarized the ethical principles typically found in the helping professions as including: (a) practice with competence, (b) do not exploit, (c) treat people with respect, (d) protect confidentiality, and (e) do not harm (p. 126). Arcus (1999) encapsulated the ethical concepts in the *Lifespan Framework for Family Life Education* (NCFR, 1997), which include:

Table 1
Degree of Ethics Education in Undergraduate Family Programs

0	No discussion of ethics in any context
1	Random discussion of ethics in one or more courses
2	Superficial but regular treatment of ethics in one or more nonrequired courses
3	Thorough treatment of ethics in a unit of one nonrequired course
4	Thorough treatment of ethics in units of more than one nonrequired course
5	Entire course on ethics as a nonrequired class
6	Nonacademic ethics seminar or lecture series required for all students
7	Thorough, consistent treatment of ethics in unit of one required course
8	Required, academic, full-credit course on ethics
9	Integration of ethics across required curriculum without one thorough course
10	Integration of ethics across curriculum including one required, thorough course

respect for persons, the interrelationship of rights and responsibilities, taking responsibility for actions, ethical values as one kind of values and as guides to human social conduct, personal autonomy and social responsibility, the complexity and difficulty of ethical choices, the ethical implications of social and technological change, and developing a personal code. (p. 53)

Although there are additional principles that can and have been articulated, a curriculum that considers a set of ethical principles such as these will certainly be more effective than one without such a framework. The *Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Family Scientists* adopted by NCFR incorporate a principles-based philosophy where underlying ethical principles such as those above are adapted to the specific contexts in which family professionals work.

Acting ethically does not simply involve learning a set of rules. Instead, it entails embracing a way of thinking and acting that is based in principle, while also being sensitive to context and oriented toward personal well-being and growth. One pedagogical strategy that may be helpful is for students to formulate underlying personal ethical principles that they can use to help them make reasoned and moral ethical choices in their future professional responsibilities.

Kitchener (1986) outlined four goals for ethical education that have important implications for educating family professionals. These include:

1. Stimulating ethical sensitivity: This involves helping students increase their awareness of the complex and various ethical issues that may confront them as professionals. Kitchener suggested, "This task cannot be relegated to a single class. Rather, it requires the commitment of an entire faculty to identify and raise moral issues as they appear in their classes and in practice" (p. 308). This argues strongly for an integrated approach to ethical education for family science students in which the faculty coordinate their efforts, and each has a stake in the teaching process. Whereas many programs that teach ethics have an excellent course in this area, they also should teach professional ethics "across the curriculum," if they want to seriously impact their students in this important area (Craig, 1991).

2. Improving ethical reasoning: According to Kitchener, improving students' ethical reasoning involves strengthening their ability to move beyond a sense of "moral intuition" and helping them acquire the critical thinking tools to be able to competently analyze and judge ethical problems. This presumes an understanding of the theories of applied ethicists on issues such as ethical justification in the helping professions (Drane, 1982) and of ethical decision making (Kitchener, 1984, 1985, 1986).

3. Developing moral responsibility: Kitchener stated that

developing students' moral responsibility involves helping students make and justify ethical decisions about specific cases called ethical dilemmas. It also involves helping students better understand "the responsibilities of professionals involved in making ethical decisions" (p. 309).

4. Coping with ethical ambiguity: Developing students' attitudes and skills for coping with ethical ambiguity involves "introducing students to the true ambiguity that often surrounds ethical choices" (p. 309), including the fact that acting ethically can be painful, difficult, and frustrating.

Other Pedagogical Issues

Degrees of ethics coverage in curriculum. Table 1 presents a model of the degrees of professional ethics education that can exist in undergraduate family programs. Given the number of complex legal, moral, and ethical issues facing professionals in the family field, an ideal approach to ethics education may be the combination of systematic coverage of ethics across the curriculum that includes a required course with thorough, systematic coverage of ethics (number 10 in Table 1). Programs differ in mission and resources, however, so although it is possible to suggest the foregoing as an ideal, the reality is that most programs likely will not find that approach feasible. Given the constraints under which most family studies faculty operate, as well as the ever-expanding knowledge base, ethics education usually is taught as a unit of a broader course (often a capstone, professionally oriented teaching-methods course), rather than as an entire class devoted to ethics (Haemmerlie & Matthews, 1988; Quoss, 1993). Regardless of their situation, faculties could use the framework in Table 1 to assess the degree of their current ethics coverage, to consider what other options exist, and to consider the best way to increase the quality of their ethics education. The fact that coverage of ethics often is limited to a couple of weeks in the context of another class suggests the need for creative pedagogy that goes beyond the superficial treatment of a crucial set of issues.

Thinking critically with and about an ethical code. Craig (1991) warned that "the greatest possible danger may come from an unquestioning acceptance of any code, standard, or set of practices" (p. 6). Thus, while acquainting our students with the *Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Family Scientists*, we also must teach them how to reason ethically with and think critically about that set of principles and guidelines. This is no easy task because "integration of personal and approved standards of behavior within the society and profession requires significant reflection and self-examination" (Craig, p. 3).

The pedagogical power of the ethical dilemma case study approach. Most ethics educators agree that the most effective,

efficient, and enjoyable general approach is to use well-chosen ethical dilemmas (case studies) that allow dynamic discussion of ethical principles and guidelines. One benefit of the case study approach is its ability to engage affective as well as cognitive dimensions (Arcus, 1999). Lee et al. (1994) also made a compelling case for this pedagogy:

Case studies developed around ethical issues such as these provide students with opportunities to discuss alternative actions they might take, predict likely consequences, evaluate potential outcomes, and establish general ethical principles to apply in other situations. By analyzing such issues as undergraduates, students should be better equipped to make more ethical decisions as professionals. (p. 29)

Important readings. For those who have not taught a course or a unit on ethics for family professionals, the reference list of this article is a good place to start for helpful information about ethics education. The single most important article is by Arcus (1999). It provides an excellent application of the ethics education work of scholars such as Callahan (1980), Nash (1996), and Thiroux (1986) to family science curricula. Another excellent article is by Bernita Quoss (1993). These two articles are important reading for all who wish to effectively teach ethics to undergraduate family science students. We also strongly recommend others (i.e., Brock, 1993; Doherty, 1995; Doherty et al., 1986; Knaub & Meredith, 1991; Leigh et al., 1986). For example, Doherty's framework distinguishes levels of involvement for parent and family educators in relation to marriage and family therapy. This important contribution should be in the syllabus of any course or unit on ethics for family professionals because it clearly articulates the need to work within one's professional training and competence. In addition, it provides helpful and concrete examples.

Summary and Conclusions

For the majority of its existence, NCFR has been without a formal code of ethics. This was remedied in 1998, when the Board of Directors approved the *Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Family Scientists*, which had been earlier developed by the Family Science section of NCFR. Although not legalistic, these guidelines are intended to be sensitizing and educational and can be used by all members of the organization in their own practice and in training their students for future work with families and their members.

Ethics education serves to prepare future professionals to relate ethically with their students or clients, as well as with persons within the profession itself. Thus, in addition to any emphasis on relevant vocational issues, including legal obligations, students need to learn "the moral principles that comprise a professional code of ethics" (Haemmerlie & Matthews, 1988). In other words, ethics education should not only provide our students with better vocational training, but it also should help them feel a part of an emerging profession dedicated to strengthening families.

Using the NCFR principles and guidelines, the Family Science Section is undertaking the next step of creating a bank of ethical dilemmas and case studies that can be utilized in ethics education. Lee et al. (1994) recommended that professional associations survey practicing professionals in their membership for information on the types of ethical dilemmas they experience. To begin the process, NCFR members or other professionals are

invited to participate in this endeavor by contacting the first author.

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Appendix A

National Council on Family Relations

Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Family Scientists

These “Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Family Scientists” were drafted by the Family Science Section of National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) and adopted by the NCFR Board of Directors at its 1998 spring board meeting. The approach of providing general principles with illustrative guidelines was implemented because the guidelines are meant to be educational and sensitizing rather than a legalistic code with enforcement potential.

It is natural for guidelines to evolve as new issues and circumstances arise. Examples are offered because different concerns arise at various historical times. Thus, the examples help to identify specific issues so family scientists can become sensitive to them. When modifications or additions to the principles and guidelines seem appropriate, family scientists should make known their concerns or ideas to officers of the Family Science Section of NCFR. Although the Family Science Section is the professional association vehicle that helps to clarify and publicize ethical principles and guidelines, this document is intended for all individuals who consider themselves family scientists. This may include university students, social service professionals, educators, therapists, and administrators.

PURPOSE: These ethical principles and guidelines were developed to

- *inspire and encourage family scientists to act ethically,*
- *provide guidance in dealing with often-complex ethical issues,*
- *provide ethical guidance in areas that family scientists may overlook, and*
- *enhance the professional image and status of family scientists by increasing the level of professional consciousness.*

The principles that apply to family scientists in all their professional situations are included in the first section. The remaining sections relate to family scientists in specific professional arenas.

I. General Principles for Family Scientists

This section identifies general ethical principles that are relevant to family scientists in all professional settings.

Family scientists are respectful of all individuals, do not unethically discriminate, do not develop inappropriate intimate personal relationships in their role as family scientists, are sensitive to the complications of multiple role relationships, protect the confidentiality of their students or clients, and do not engage in sexual harassment.

Guidelines

- 1.01 Family scientists are respectful of others, show sensitivity to the dignity of all humans, and avoid all forms of exploitation.
- 1.02 Family scientists are not unethically discriminatory on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability or socioeconomic status. We recognize that discrimination occurs in our society, and when done wisely for positive purposes it may be appropriate. For example, we may allow a student with a vision impairment to sit in the front row of the classroom.

- 1.03 When attempting to influence the behavior or attitudes of students or clients, family scientists should not use methods that involve undue influence, such as coercion or manipulation.
- 1.04 Family scientists segregate intimate personal relationships from their role as family scientists. Therefore, they do not develop inappropriate personal relationships with students, clients, or research subjects.
- 1.05 Family scientists are sensitive to the complications in dual or multiple role situations and are ethical in those roles. For example, family scientists may teach classes in which a son or daughter is enrolled. Others may have professional colleagues in a workshop where some form of personal evaluation is an expected outcome.
- 1.06 Family scientists protect confidentiality in their professional role as family scientists, whether it be in teaching, service, public speaking, writing, or consulting activities. For example, if family scientists share information with students about others, the confidentiality of those involved should be protected. This can be done by changing identifying information, creating composite cases, or summarizing information.
- 1.07 If information is shared with a family scientist that mandates reporting (such as child abuse or the possibility of extreme harm), such information is to be reported to the appropriate authorities. Whenever possible, individuals should be informed in advance of the family scientist’s need to report.
- 1.08 Family scientists avoid sexually harassing all persons with whom they come in contact in a professional or personal setting. Sexual harassment involves unwelcome intimate and sexual advances, requests, or other conduct of a sexual nature that is used as grounds for providing benefits or services for terms of or conditions of employment, or for the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s learning or work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive learning or working environment. Such things as inappropriate hugging, touching, or language are considered harassment.
- 1.09 Family scientists who belong to other professional organizations with more elaborate or role-specialized guidelines should abide by them. For example, professional family therapists should use the ethical guidelines of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and medical doctors should utilize the ethical guidelines of the American Medical Association.

Principle II: Family Scientists Are Respectful of Students and Clients

Family scientists are respectful of diverse family forms. They are respectful of students’ sensitivity when discussing personal family issues. Family scientists do not exploit the hierarchical relationship with persons they serve and are respectful of privacy issues.

Guidelines

- 2.01 When family scientists teach marital and family courses, they inform students that sometimes students in classes of this nature have painful memories of personal or family experiences. They should inform students of appropriate counseling resources available to them.
- 2.02 Family scientists recognize the strengths and weaknesses of various family forms and do not operate from a deficit perspective in discussing various family forms.
- 2.03 When giving examples, family scientists utilize examples with families from diverse cultures and forms.
- 2.04 When subjects are discussed in a course or class, including controversial issues, family scientists encourage an open, respectful, and thoughtful atmosphere that acknowledges and respects diversity of values, beliefs, and attitudes.
- 2.05 Family scientists do not insist that students agree with or adopt a particular perspective. In fairness to students, teachers should, where appropriate, divulge personal values and biases and label them as such.
- 2.06 When teaching, family scientists differentiate between knowledge and insight gained from clinical or personal experience and knowledge obtained from published theory or research.
- 2.07 Family scientists who are also clinicians do not pursue or allow clin-

ical relationships to develop with students during the course of instruction. If students request clinical services, they should be directed to an appropriate provider of the clinical service.

2.08 Family scientists who are not clinicians do not cross into a therapeutic role while interacting with students. Family scientists make referrals for clinical services when appropriate.

2.09 Family scientists avoid any situation or the perception of any situation in which grades may be exchanged for favors of any kind.

2.10 Family scientists who ask (or allow) students in courses or classes to share personal and family experiences in class regularly remind students to treat any information received as confidential information not to be shared or discussed with anyone outside the classroom. The fact that confidentiality cannot be assured should be stated, however.

2.11 While teaching a for-credit course, family scientists do not make assignments that require students to divulge potentially painful personal or family experiences or information without providing an alternative assignment for those who do not wish to participate. An exception exists if the class is part of professional training program that requires such educational activities.

2.12 When family scientists request (or require) students to obtain potentially sensitive and painful information from family members (e.g., in a genogram assignment) or others, students are carefully instructed and cautioned about potential harm and allowed to use their own discretion about which information to seek.

2.13 Family scientists do not coerce their students to participate as subjects in research. If students enrolled in courses do not wish to participate in or assist with research projects, they should be offered alternative assignments of equal value and be assured that their decision not to participate will in no way affect their grade.

2.14 In giving assignments in which students are required to discuss their values, family scientists develop grading criteria that do not include evaluation of the students' values.

2.15 When family scientists return papers or post scores, confidentiality of the students' grades are maintained. For example, scores should neither be posted nor papers returned in any hierarchical order of points earned.

2.16 Family scientists base material taught on what is appropriate for students, rather than solely on the instructor's personal or professional needs or interests, such as a research agenda.

Principle III: Family Scientists Abide by High Professional Standards

Family scientists are responsible for upholding high professional standards. They are encouraged to be cooperative with other family scientists in gathering and sharing of scientific information. They strive to keep current with material in their domain. They are ethical in representing their profession at their place of employment, as well as other settings.

Guidelines

3.01 Family scientists are supportive of and cooperative with other family scientists and the profession at large regarding the timely sharing of new ideas, theories, research findings, and innovative program developments.

3.02 Wherever possible, family scientists promote the profession in such a way that members can make contributions to society for the enhancement of families and the growth and development of individuals in various family settings.

3.03 Family scientists give proper credit or acknowledgment to the works of others when formally sharing that information.

3.04 Personal information gained from or known about a colleague is treated with discretion. Sharing the information with others should be done only for the welfare of the colleague, except where appropriate disciplinary action may be involved. When questionable professional or personal conduct may have a bearing on professional activities that concern initially should be discussed with the involved colleague(s) when feasible. If, in the judgment of the family scientist, that is not practical or resolution of the matter is not apparent, such behavior should be reported appropriately.

3.05 Family scientists are adequately prepared for their professional responsibilities. If there are professionally recognized standards of certification or licensing requiring experience, supervision, or additional education, family scientists seek such credentials.

3.06 Family scientists use the times under which they are under obligation to an employer for professional purposes.

Principle IV: Family Scientists Conduct Research Ethically

Family scientists contribute to society and to the profession through research and evaluation activities. When conducting research or evaluation, family scientists recognize that their ultimate responsibility is to the participants. Family scientists honestly report the findings of their study.

Guidelines

4.01 Family scientists conduct all aspects of the research process with respect for the dignity of those who participate in the research, and they ensure that those who assist in the research process do likewise.

4.02 Family scientists inform research participants of the purpose of their research, any potential risk of involvement, how confidentiality will be protected, the right to withdraw from the study at any time, the way the data will be used, and available referral resources if risks are involved.

4.03 Family scientists avoid "doing therapy" with research participants (unless therapy is a part of the research design). Researchers should provide a referral to an appropriate resource for those who request it.

4.04 Family scientists give credit to others for contributions to scholarship in proportion to the contributions made.

4.05 Family scientists do not manipulate research data for the purposes of supporting their views.

4.06 Family scientists use research money for the stated purpose described in the research proposal.

Principle V: Family Scientists Are Ethical in Their Interactions With Employing Organizations or Agencies

Family scientists are respectful of the internal policies and procedures of current and past employers. Family scientists seek to promote the highest standards of policies and practice by their employers.

Guidelines

5.01 When family scientists and those in training have information pertaining to an organization's internal activities or planning and the knowledge may hinder or harm the organization if known by outsiders, the information is treated as confidential unless these activities are unethical or harmful to others.

5.02 Family scientists abide by the policies and procedures of their respective employing organizations. Where such policies or procedures are believed to violate professional standards or cause unprofessional conduct by employees, attempts are made to rectify the situation. If such attempts are unsuccessful, concerns for the pertinent policies or procedures are reported to an appropriate governing or investigative body.

5.03 Family scientists cooperate with other community organizations that provide services to mutual clients. Family scientists do not share client information with other agencies, however, unless the client has given written permission or it is mandated by policy or law.

5.04 Family scientists are aware of other resources that may benefit their students or clients and make appropriate referrals.

Principle VI: Family Scientists Are Involved in Improving Society

Family scientists are advocates for individuals and families and participate in developing policies and laws that are respectful and empowering to them.

Guidelines

- 6.01 Family scientists are concerned for the general welfare of all individuals and families in society. Whether as professionals or private citizens, they engage in family advocacy at the local, state, and national levels.
- 6.02 Family scientists are encouraged to participate in developing laws and policies that are respectful of and empowering to all individuals and families and in modifying such policies and laws that are not.

Principle VII: Family Scientists Are Ethical When Reviewing Professional Writing

When a reviewer for a professional work, family scientists avoid conflicts of interest, read materials carefully and in their entirety, and evaluate them fairly.

Guidelines

- 7.01 Family scientists do not review articles where there is conflict of interest, such as when the work is that of a friend or in other instances in which they may feel a sense of obligation to the author.
- 7.02 Family scientists carefully read in their entirety materials that are accepted for review and provide explicit reasons for their evaluations.

Principle VIII: Family Scientists Understand and Abide by Ethical Principles and Assist Others in Doing So

Family scientists understand and abide by ethical principles, encourage and assist other family scientists to know and apply them, and teach ethical principles to students of family science.

Guidelines

- 8.01 Family scientists understand and abide by ethical principles.
- 8.02 Family scientists assist other family scientists to know and apply ethical principles by encouraging understanding and adherence to them and by their willingness to discuss the principles.
- 8.03 Family scientists teach students of family science to understand and abide by ethical principles in their professional roles.
- 8.04 Family scientists who are involved in an ethical dilemma consult with other family scientists about the situation. A written record of the problem, the resolution, and the justification for the resolution is given to another family scientist so that if one is accused of unethical conduct, the record can be used to demonstrate that the family scientist was aware of the ethical concern and dealt with it conscientiously.
- 8.05 Family scientists assist the profession to further identify and articulate ethical issues. Additional ethical principles and guidelines (beyond those included herein) are to be communicated to the chair of the Family Science section of the National Council on Family Relations.

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