



Comparing Cultural Clout in Professional Codes of Ethics

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“Thinking about ethics should pervade all professional activity. The definition of ethics as the science of morals or rules of behavior overlaps with the definition of psychology as the study of behaviour both internal (cognition and feelings) and external (language and actions). Before embarking on professional work the ethical implications should be considered as part of the work context with legal, professional and other frameworks.”

-British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (2006)

Introduction & Purpose

- Ethical values are culturally generated and socially sustained.
- Professional codes of ethics are manifestations of those values pertinent to the ideology of a particular field.
- Our purpose was to investigate similarities and differences among three professional codes of ethics.
- Comparisons were based primarily on the structure, content, and dynamics of each code.

Code Comparisons



Items Unique to the APS Code

- Structure
 - APS code intertwines Principles and Ethical Standards
 - Three Principles
 1. Respect for the Dignity and Rights of People and Peoples
 2. Propriety
 3. Integrity
- Ethical cooperation with other professionals (interpreters) is discussed in depth
- APS code is shorter in length
- In its Preamble, the APS code offers definitions of relevant terms used
- Code created based on “reflections within the APS.”
- Applies to professionals



Items Unique to the APA Code

- Principles and standards defined separately
- Five Principles
 - A. Beneficence and Nonmaleficence
 - B. Fidelity and Responsibility
 - C. Integrity
 - D. Justice
 - E. Respect for People’s Rights and Dignity
- Standards - “set forth enforceable rules for conduct as psychologists”
- Purpose - accounts for all the stakeholders in the profession, those in career training and the populations that psychologists serve
- Includes note on history



Items Unique to the BPS Code

- Standards described as they correspond to Principles
- Includes systematic guide for the ethical decision making process
- Principles: Respect, Competence, Responsibility, Integrity
- Psychologists are to refer to the code, but ultimately use personal judgment
- “This Code attempts to encapsulate the wisdom and experience of the Society to support its members in their professional activities, reassure the public that it is worthy of their trust and to clarify the expectations of all.”
- Does not acknowledge its relevance in the lives of students or those in training.
- Developed by considering other codes and appendices

APS ↔ APA

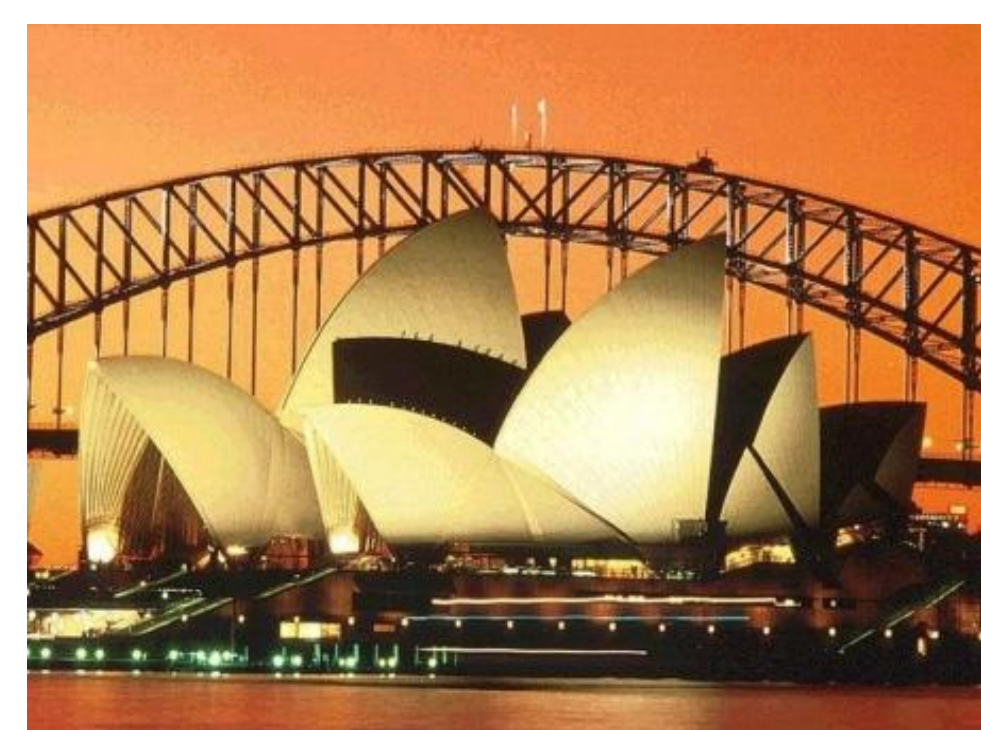
- The APS general principles are intended to operate in all sections of the code.
- Psychologists should:
 - be responsible to themselves and colleagues
 - respect the dignity and worth of clients
- Generated by using feedback from professionals
- Content:
 - confidentiality
 - informed consent
 - multiple relationships
 - Who does the code apply to?
 - Who should obey the code?

APA ↔ BPS

- Content (APA code/BPS code)
- Overall totals of principles and standards (104/110)
 - Principles (5/4)
 - Standards (10/16)
 - Standard subcategories (89/90)
- Principles- broad ethical guidelines that underlie standards
- Standards- expectations of professionals
- Psychologists must use the code in conjunction with laws and other regulations.
- Psychologists have a duty to uphold the highest ethical standards.

APS ↔ APA ↔ BPS

- Dynamic
 - Frequent revisions
 - Designed around current issues
- Principles- broad ethical guidelines are basis for standards
- Standards- expectation of professionals
- Modifiers
 - APA & APS: reasonably, **appropriately** potentially
 - BPS: “Psychologists should...”
- Content



Conclusions

- Although formally dissimilar, the APS, APA, and BPS codes reflect similar cultural and professional values.
- The content and applicability in these codes are effectively comparable.
- Ethical codes are dynamic and change in response to dynamic ethical dilemmas.
- A comparison of codes from Eastern and Western cultures could be a topic for future research.



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