

# The Significance of CPA's Ratification of the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists

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In November 2008, the Canadian Psychological Association ratified the Universal Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists. Led by Canadian psychologist, Dr. Janel Gauthier of Laval University, a past-president of CPA, this Declaration was six years in the making. It was based on research and world-wide consultations, and carried out under the auspices of the International Union of Psychological Science and the International Association of Applied Psychology, both of which adopted the Declaration in July 2008.

The Declaration is not a code of ethics. It is a statement of ethical principles and related values that are general and aspirational, rather than specific or prescriptive. It is up to individual countries to translate the principles into specific standards relevant to local or regional cultures, customs, beliefs, and laws. The four ethical principles of the Declaration are Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Peoples, Competent Caring for the Well-Being of Persons and Peoples, Integrity, and Professional and Scientific Responsibilities to Society.

What is the significance of CPA's ratification of the Declaration for Canadian psychology? The ethical principles of the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists were developed at a time when Canadian psychologists were almost exclusively of European origin

with a "Western" world view. Although the ethical principles of the Code are very consistent with those of the Universal Declaration, the ethical discourse that occurred in the development of the Declaration involved representatives from five continents holding a variety of world views. This discourse resulted in definitions and explanations of ethical principles that reflected an integration of those world views. It may be helpful to consider some aspects of the Declaration in the upcoming revision of the Canadian Code. For instance the Code's principles of Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Responsible Caring might be more responsive to the increasing multicultural nature of Canadian society, and to the increasing international work of Canadian psychologists, if reference to "peoples" were added. Although the CPA concept of respect includes valuing the inherent worth of individual persons, the Declaration goes further in recognizing that personal identity is connected to others both in the present and across generations and history.

The Declaration of Ethical Principles for Psychologists is a milestone in psychology's relatively short history of ethics discourse. The future will tell how much the Declaration will influence Canadian psychologists and their global colleagues in building a better world. The Declaration is available on the CPA website at [http://www.cpa.ca/cpasite/userfiles/Documents/Universal\\_Declaration\\_asADOPTEDbyIUPsySIAAP\\_July2008.pdf](http://www.cpa.ca/cpasite/userfiles/Documents/Universal_Declaration_asADOPTEDbyIUPsySIAAP_July2008.pdf).

## Psychology in Prison

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health services. For those offenders with acute or demanding mental health needs, there are in-patient settings at Regional Treatment Centres — psychiatric hospitals whose catchment area happens to be the other prisons in the region.

In contrast to the current situation in many community hospitals in which the role of psychologists is diminishing, psychologists within the correctional system play a major leadership role and are involved at every step of the Strategy. Many of the regional and national coordinators of the components of the Strategy are psychologists. A psychologist oversees the mental health assessments that are completed on newly ad-

mitted offenders. Psychologists also complete the in-depth assessments that are required on some of these offenders.

Thus, there has been a significant shift in the role of the psychologist within the correctional system, with the provision of mental health care becoming an increasingly important component. Psychologists are frequently called upon to provide crisis intervention for offenders. Offenders are at increased risk for depression and suicide. A large percentage of offenders at Treatment Centres are diagnosed with schizophrenia.

In terms of treatment approaches, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy is the most frequently employed due to the extensive literature on its effectiveness in dealing with criminal behaviour (for example, see the work of Don Andrews, Jim Bonta and Paul Gendreau). It has also been shown to be an evidence-based treatment for depression and schizophrenia and is thus frequently used by

correctional psychologists in dealing with mental health problems. However, as is the case in most settings, psychologists may choose from a variety of intervention techniques and can use their professional judgement in selecting the most appropriate therapeutic approach to address an individual offender's mental health needs.

The single biggest challenge facing the correctional system in the next few years is the increase in the numbers of offenders that will result from proposed legislative changes such as expanding the list of crimes that carry mandatory minimum sentences to include drug offences and to the end of Statutory Release. As the population of offenders swells in the system, more offenders with mental health problems will enter the system and have more difficulty earning early release. This will place an additional burden on the correctional system and an increasing role for psychologists.