

Ethics and Health Education: An Annotated Bibliography

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The topic of ethics in health education has been widely discussed over the past 25 years. For instance, special editions of major health education journals have been devoted to the treatment of ethical dilemmas (see *Health Education Quarterly*, Volume 14, Issue 1, 1987; *The Eta Sigma Gamma Monograph*, Volume 12, Issue 2, 1994). A code of ethics for the health education profession has been developed, and professional associations, such as AAHE, the American College Health Association (ACHA), and others, have formed ethics committees to educate members about ethical practices and recommend changes to the Code when necessary. The purpose of this article is to compile, into an annotated bibliography and resource listing, selected resources related to ethical issues in health education practice and research. Resources listed below include the 1) HExtra “A Question of Ethics,” 2) general resources on ethics, including web sites not specifically related to health education, 3) ethical issues related to the health education *profession* and to health education *practice*, and 4) ethics regarding health education and other *research* and *evaluation*.

A Question of Ethics

Since 1998, “A Question of Ethics” has been published as a regular column of HExtra, designed to engage AAHE members and future members of the profession in a dialogue regarding professional ethics in health education. In each issue of HExtra, the AAHE Ethics Committee provides a case scenario and discussion questions which allow readers to critically examine a number of ethical challenges in health education. Case studies are intended for classroom use to promote familiarity with the *The Code of Ethics for the Health Education Profession*. For more, see <http://www.aahperd.org/aahe/template.cfm?template=publications-hextra.html>.

General Resources on Ethics

Beauchamp, T. L., & Walters, L. (2002). *Contemporary issues in bioethics* (6th Ed.). Wadsworth Publishing: Belmont, CA.

The most recent edition of this book has built on five other editions to represent all of the most important points of view on the most pressing topics in bioethics. The book contains essays and medical and legal cases—such as “The Morality of Abortion,” “Is There a Right to Die,” and “Mandatory HIV Screening and Testing”—all important discussion areas for health educators. The book provides readers with a range of perspectives, including those of medical researchers and practitioners, legal experts, and philosophers. However, the authors mainly focus on a medical, rather than a health education, approach to ethics. Still, the opening chapter provides the best introduction to ethical theory and principles available.

Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University

<http://www.scu.edu/ethics/homepage.html>

As stated on this useful website, The Markkula Center “is one of the preeminent centers for research and dialogue on ethical issues in critical areas of American life.” The Center serves as a resource for faculty, students, and the general public for addressing ethical issues in teaching, research, and action. The Center’s website contains published resources, such as journal articles, case studies, the Center’s own series on ethical decision making, and ethical issues in the news. One of the most intriguing features offered on this website is the links section, loaded with 338 links in the database. This well-organized section connects visitors to other ethical centers and institutes, as well as resources on ethical theory, health care ethics, and more than 850 codes of ethics from professional societies and other entities.

Ethics in Health Education Practice and in the Health Education Profession

Health Education Quarterly, Volume 14, Issue 1, 1987 (Special edition: Ethical dilemmas in health promotion)

This special issue on ethical dilemmas in health promotion contains articles such as: “Ethics in worksite health programming: Who is served?”, “The business of health promotion: Ethical issues and professional responsibilities”, and “Ethical issues in government sponsored public health campaigns.” Contributing authors include Larry Green, Ken McLeroy, Allison Taub, and other key leaders in the health education profession.

Bensley, L. B. (1996). Values and morals: Bridging the gap between knowledge and behavior (AAHE Scholar Address). *Journal of Health Education, 27(6), 332-337.*

This article contains the text of the AAHE scholar address delivered by Loren Bensley at the 1996 convention in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Bensley suggests that health educators are obliged to incorporate the teaching of values and morals as a means of bridging the gap between what students know and how they behave. Being competent morally is just as important as being competent in the knowledge, decision making, or other skills that health educators teach. Four areas are presented that need to be addressed to strengthen students’ moral behavior.

Callahan, D., & Jennings, B. (2002). Ethics and public health: Forging a strong relationship. *American Journal of Public Health, 92(2), 169-176.*

This article provides a brief history of bioethics, along with a discussion of early ethical issues in bioethics. The authors argue that, for many years, the focus was on ethical issues related to “high-technology medicine,” rather than on dilemmas of population health and the ethical problems of public health programs and regulations. They contend that the time has come to fully integrate the ethical problems of public health into the *field* of public health. A nice section related to ethics in health promotion/disease prevention and risk reduction adds much to the article.

Callahan, D., Koenig, B., & Minkler, M. (1998-1999). Promoting health and preventing disease: Ethical demands and social challenges. *International Quarterly of Community Health Education, 18(2), 163-180.*

This article documents the tension, in health promotion and disease prevention, between individualistic and common good (public health) perspectives. Ethical issues presented include

balancing civil liberties and public health, holding individuals responsible for their health-related behaviors, and the ethics of incentives in behavior change interventions. This article is a “must-have” for health education graduate students.

Capwell, E. M., Smith, B. J., Shireffs, J., and Olsen, L. K. (2000). Development of a unified code of ethics for the health education profession: A report of the national task force on ethics in health education. *Journal of Health Education, 31(4), 212-218.*

and

Capwell, E. M., Smith, B. J., Shirreffs, J., & Olsen, L. K. (2000). Development of a unified code of ethics for the health education profession: A report of the national task force on ethics in health education. *Journal of School Health, 70(8), 318-321.*

This article provides a historical background on development of the profession-wide code of ethics. The authors document the long and “arduous” process undertaken, since the development of the 1976 SOPHE Code of Ethics, to secure support for a unified code of ethics from the profession. This article next presents *The Code of Ethics for the Health Education Profession*, the profession-wide code of ethics, based on common ideals shared by health educators and ethical principles and designed to uphold the integrity of the profession. The Code can also be found online through the National Coalition of Health Education Organizations website at <http://www.hsc.usf.edu/CFH/cnheo/>.

Darragh, M., & McCarrick, P. M. (1998). Public health ethics: Health by the numbers. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal, 8(3), 339-358.*

This well-written annotated bibliography focuses on ethical considerations specific to three areas in public health: health promotion and education, epidemiology, and public health administration. Article summaries are organized in categories of general literature, philosophical and ethical issues, socioeconomic and legal perspectives, individual versus societal rights, risk, the media, and personal choice, and genetics and public health. This piece serves as an excellent resource for students and health educators in all settings.

Doyle, E. I. (2000). Ethics and professionalism among university professors: practical guidelines for student interaction. *Journal of Health Education, 31(6), 358-360.*

In this article, the author presents guidelines for university health education professors’ ethical conduct and professional interaction with students.

Greenberg, J. S. (2001). *The code of ethics for the health education profession: A case study book.* Jones and Bartlet Publishers: Boston, MA.

This resource is the first (and only) book published in response to *The Code of Ethics for the Health Education Profession*. The book is a unique tool for health educators, regardless of practice setting. For each of the six Code of Ethics statements (e.g., “Responsibility to the Public”), a case study is presented with an accompanying discussion of the ethical issues related to that statement. As the study of ethics is becoming more prominent in health education, this book can be an invaluable resource for professionals, instructors, and students.

McLeory, K. R., Bibeau, D. L., & McConnell, T. C. (1993). Ethical issues in health education and health promotion: Challenges for the profession. *Journal of Health Education, 24(5), 313-318.*

Authors in this personal perspective highlight key health promotion issues related to personal responsibility for health and victim blaming, the role of the health educator in specific practice settings, and societal obsessions with health. This paper should be a required reading for all health education students.

McNab, W., Henry, J., & Goldsmith, M. (2004). Enforcing the code of ethics in health education: A prescription for compliance. *American Journal of Health Education*, 35(5), 312-315.

This teaching activity can be utilized to introduce *The Code of Ethics for the Health Education Profession* to students at the undergraduate or graduate level. The activity involves students in evaluating hypothetical ethical scenarios and discussing responses to potential ethical violations.

Patterson, S. M., & Vitello, E. M. (1993). Ethics in health education: The need to include a model course in professional preparation programs. *Journal of Health Education*, 24(4), 239-244.

Authors in this article propose a model (ethics instruction) course outline for health education professional preparation programs.

Price, J. H., Dake, J. A., & Telljohann, S. K. (2001). Ethical issues regarding service: Perceptions of health education faculty. *American Journal of Health Education*, 32(4), 208-215.

This article describes a study examining health education faculty's perceptions regarding ethical scenarios related to advising students and service. Nearly three-fourths of participants reported that their programs taught ethical issues as units in a course for students of health education. Authors report that participants seemed to differ in their perceptions of ethics in the service areas. Other findings and the implications of the study are discussed.

Sciacca, J., Dennis, D. L., & Black, D. R. (2004). Are interventions for informed, efficacious precontemplators unethical? *American Journal of Health Education*, 35(6), 322-327.

Authors of this paper discuss the ethical dilemma for health educators trying to change the health behaviors of people who are informed about the risks of engaging in an unhealthy behavior, and who have the skills and confidence to change the behavior, but nonetheless choose *not* to change.

Telljohann, S. K., Price, J. H., & Dake, J. A. (2001). Selected ethical issues in the teaching of health: Perceptions of health education faculty. *American Journal of Health Education*, 32(2), 66-74.

This article describes a study examining health educators' views on several ethical issues related to teaching in higher education institutions. Results revealed that 61% of higher education institutions offered units about ethics in courses. Authors report that 75% of respondents did not believe that a code of ethics would effectively deter unethical practices. Other findings and the implications of the study are discussed.

[Ethical Issues in Health Education and Other Research and Evaluation](#)

Elliott, D., & Stern, J. E. (1997). *Research ethics: A reader*. University Press of New England: Hanover, NH.

This book provides a thorough overview of the ethical dilemmas confronting researchers, including, but not limited to, guidelines for authorship, pressures to publish study results, which may lead to fraud, and other areas of scientific misconduct.

Iammarino, N. K., O'Rourke, T. W., Pigg, R. M., & Weinberg, A. D. (1989). Ethical issues in research and publication. *Journal of School Health*, 59(3), 101-104.

Three areas of concern for health educators are addressed with regards to research and publication in health education: the student-professor relationship, joint authorship, and ethics in publishing. Potential problems are discussed and implications for the profession are cited.

Minkler, M., & National Task Force on Accreditation in Health Education. (2004). Ethical challenges for the “outside” researcher in community-based participatory research. *Health Education & Behavior*, 31(6), 684-697.

Authors in this paper present a number of ethical challenges faced by the outside researcher who embraces a community-based participatory research framework. These challenges include achieving a true “community-driven” agenda with community members, insider-outsider tensions, real and perceived racism, participatory limitations, and issues involving the sharing, ownership, and use of research results. This article may be particularly useful for scholars and practitioners alike involved with, or considering engaging in, community-based participatory research.

National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine. (1995). *On being a scientist: Responsible conduct in research*. National Academy Press: Washington, DC.

This reader states that, “the scientific research enterprise, like other human activities, is built on a foundation of trust...But this trust will endure only if the scientific community devotes itself to exemplifying and transmitting the values associated with ethical scientific conduct.” *On Being a Scientist* introduces the core issues (and values) related to scientific conduct and misconduct: conflicts of interest, publication and openness, the allocation of credit, authorship practices, and responding to violations of ethical standards. A scenario accompanies each core issue, including discussion questions for deliberation. The reader is also available at <http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/obas/>.

Oakes, J. M. (2002). Risks and wrongs in social science research: An evaluator’s guide to the IRB. *Evaluation Review*, 26(5), 443-479.

This article makes an excellent contribution to our understandings of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The author contends that IRBs are becoming stricter in judging research and evaluation projects, and this has resulted in greater frustration for both researchers and evaluators. A history of the human subjects in research review process and guidelines governing IRBs are presented. Tips are provided for improving interactions with the IRB. This piece is a “must-have” for those involved in research and evaluation projects involving human subjects.

Pigg, M. R. (1994). Ethical issues of scientific inquiry in health science education. *Eta Sigma Gamma Monograph*, 12(2), 162 pages (special issue on ethics).

This special issue monograph presents 13 papers pertaining to the ethics of planning, conducting, and reporting research in health sciences education. Papers include discussions on ethical issues regarding faculty/student collaborations in research and writing for scientific publication, and points of view pieces on ethics from biomedical, clinical, public health, school, voluntary agency, worksite, new faculty, and student perspectives. The monograph also includes the AAHE *Code of Ethics for Health Educators*, published earlier that year (in 1994) in the *Journal of Health Education*.

Price, J. H., Dake, J. A., & Islam, R. (2001). Selected ethical issues in research and publication: Perceptions of health education faculty. *Health Education & Behavior*, 28(1), 51-64.

This article summarizes a national study of perceptions of ethical issues in research and publishing of 195 health education faculty in graduate degree-granting programs. Results indicate that there is wide variation in perceptions of what is and what is not ethical in research and publishing. The authors offer implications for the practice of health education, including how to address ethical issues related to faculty research and publication.

Ross, J. G., Sundberg, E. C., Flint, K. H. (1999). Informed consent in school health research: why, how, and making it easy. *Journal of School Health*, 69(5), 171-176.

Authors of this paper discuss issues related to informed consent for students participating in health-related research in the schools. A history of informed consent is provided, along with the key elements of informed consent and the types of consent procedures that should be used in schools. Authors propose ways in which participation in health-related research can be maximized using informed consent.