

Apr 20th, 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

# Relationships and Client Protection Differences in the APA and ACA Ethical Codes

Michael W. Firmin

*Cedarville University*, [firmin@cedarville.edu](mailto:firmin@cedarville.edu)

Kristin DeWitt

*Cedarville University*, [kristindewitt@cedarville.edu](mailto:kristindewitt@cedarville.edu)

Lauren A. Kuhlwein

*Cedarville University*, [lkuhlwein@cedarville.edu](mailto:lkuhlwein@cedarville.edu)

Taylor E. Hobbs

*Cedarville University*, [tehobbs@cedarville.edu](mailto:tehobbs@cedarville.edu)

Aubrey Gillette

*Cedarville University*, [agillette@cedarville.edu](mailto:agillette@cedarville.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/research\\_scholarship\\_symposium](http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/research_scholarship_symposium)



Part of the [Clinical Psychology Commons](#), and the [Counseling Psychology Commons](#)

---

Firmin, Michael W.; DeWitt, Kristin; Kuhlwein, Lauren A.; Hobbs, Taylor E.; and Gillette, Aubrey, "Relationships and Client Protection Differences in the APA and ACA Ethical Codes" (2016). *The Research and Scholarship Symposium*. 32.  
[http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/research\\_scholarship\\_symposium/2016/poster\\_presentations/32](http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/research_scholarship_symposium/2016/poster_presentations/32)

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Cedarville, a service of the Centennial Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Research and Scholarship Symposium by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Cedarville. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@cedarville.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@cedarville.edu).



## Introduction

- Ethical codes provide **structure and consistency** to an organization as well as ensure **protection** for those who are receiving services from an organization. In the counseling profession.
- ACA has designed its code of ethics to reflect the principles used in the medical model. (Kaplan, 2014).
- The **ACA** ethical code was **updated** in 2014, partly in order to address rising issues such as technological communication.
- Teo (2015) argues that an update to the **APA** code of ethics could be beneficial because it is **no longer sufficient** to address the moral issues of our current culture.
- Under the **ACA** ethical code, counselors must follow **precise guidelines** when interacting with others.
- Contrastingly, the **APA** ethical code has **fewer, broad guidelines** for professionals which allow members more freedom in their decision-making.

## Research Procedure

- Line-by-line comparison** of the APA and ACA ethical codes regarding competency and qualification requirements.
- This was conducted by **five** separate researchers and the present reported findings represent the consensus among all research team members.
- Researchers compared notes and determined instances when the wording was different, but the meanings were essentially the same.
- Differences in meaning were then coded based on the category of the information.

## Findings

Out of **144 total differences** in these ethical codes, **34 differences** pertain specifically to the topics of relationships and client protection.

ACA has very extensive **requirements** and **prohibitions** relating to **therapeutic relationships**; APA is **more general** with a principle-driven approach.

- Relationship boundary changes*
- Limited potential for multiple relationships*

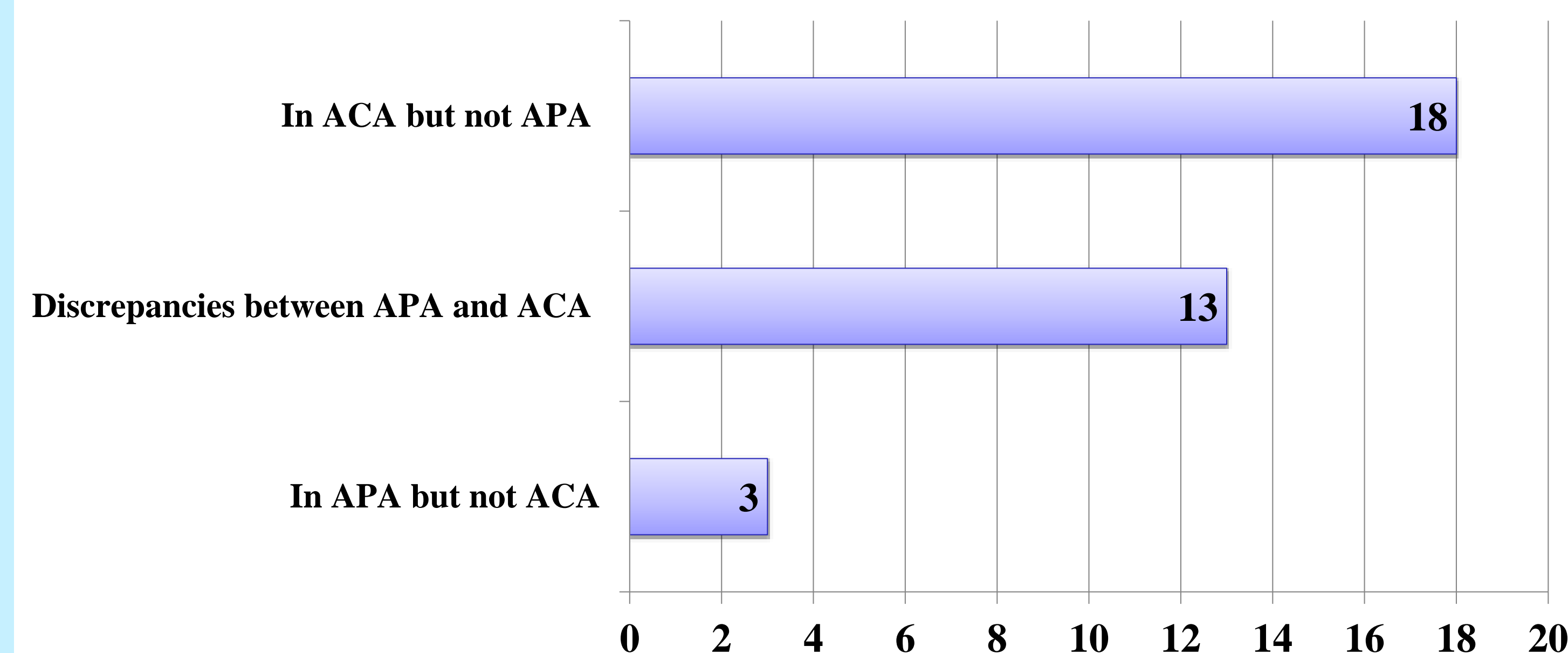
Supervisor/supervisee relationships

- ACA spells out guidelines in more detail*
- APA is very general, sometimes silent*

## Results

APA Location	Discrepancies
3.05	APA defines what <b>multiple relationships</b> are.
3.10b1,c	ACA does not have to provide an " <b>appropriate explanation</b> " for persons who are incapable of giving <b>informed consent</b> .
5.05	Counselors may use <b>testimonials</b> .
6.03	<b>Withholding records</b> in emergency situations due to <b>not receiving payment</b> specifically prohibited in APA.
6.04	Counselors must specify their <b>plan for collection of fees</b> in the case of non-payment in the informed consent.
6.05	Counselors must document all <b>bartering</b> in a " <b>clear written contract</b> ."
7.05	APA says " <b>required</b> " therapy while ACA says " <b>requested</b> " therapy.
9.03a,c	ACA must <b>disclose</b> the purpose and nature of assessment; <b>exceptions for APA</b> (e.g., when mandated by law); Psychologists must obtain consent for interpreter
10.02	Counselors must <b>document changes</b> to the therapeutic relationship (ACA).
10.03	Counselors must <b>screen all prospective group members</b> to make sure they are compatible.
10.06	Psychologists must <b>not terminate</b> in order to engage in a <b>sexual relationship</b> with family members (APA). ACA does not specify.
10.07	" <b>Romantic</b> " and/or " <b>sexual</b> " (ACA); APA only says " <b>sexual</b> "
10.08	" <b>Sexual and/or romantic</b> "(ACA) vs. "Sexual" APA; 2 vs. 5 years
ACA Additions	
A.1.c.	Counselors should create a <b>counseling plan</b> with client
A.6.a.	Counselors should use caution when taking on clients with whom the counselor has had a <b>previous relationship</b>
A.6.b-c	Counselors use caution when <b>extending counseling boundaries</b> ; Document when is a must when extending boundaries.
A.6.d.	Counselors must obtain informed consent before any <b>role changes</b> take place in counseling.
A.7.	Counselors <b>advocate</b> for their clients; must obtain informed consent prior to advocacy.
A.10.f	Counselors should use caution when <b>accepting gifts</b>
B.3.a.	Counselors make every effort to make sure <b>client confidentiality</b> and privacy is <b>upheld by subordinates</b> .
B.3.f.	Counselors protect the confidentiality of <b>deceased clients</b> .
B.6.d.	Counselors obtain <b>consent</b> from the client <b>before</b> allowing anyone to <b>observe</b> .
D.1.c	Counselors working on <b>interdisciplinary teams</b> work to best serve their clients.
E.5.d.	Counselors may <b>refrain from making/reporting a diagnosis</b> if it is in the best interest of the client. There is nothing about this diagnosis issue in APA.
F.3.a.	Counselors should use caution when extending <b>supervisor/supervisee relationships</b> . Supervisors must not enter into a <b>supervisory relationship</b> with "individuals with whom they have an <b>inability to remain objective</b> ."
F.3.d.	<b>Case examples</b> from clients, students, or supervisee information must be used under strict guidelines.
F.7.f.	<b>Student supervisors</b> have the same <b>ethical responsibilities</b> as professionals.
F.7.g.	Counselor educators use caution when choosing to engage in <b>social, sexual, or other intimate relationships</b> with former students.
F.10.c.	<b>Counselor educators</b> avoid engaging in <b>nonacademic relationships</b> with students.
F.10.d.	Counselors should use caution when <b>extending educator-student boundaries</b> .
F.10.f.	

## Results (continued)



## Discussion Regarding Discrepancies

- APA indicates that a psychologist is **not** allowed **to withhold a client's records** due to non-payment if there is an **emergency situation**. The ACA ethical code does not say this.
- According to APA, a psychologist must refrain from **engaging in a sexual relationship** with a past client for **at least two years** after the counseling relationship has ended. A counselor must refrain from engaging in a **sexual and/or romantic** relationship with a past client for at least **five years**.
- According to ACA, a counselor **must disclose** the **purpose and nature of assessment**. Contrastingly, the APA ethical code lists occasions when a psychologist **does not have to do so**. One of these occasions is when assessment is **court-mandated**.
- According to ACA, a counselor may **refrain from making a diagnosis** or reporting a diagnosis if it is in the best interest of the client. The APA ethical does not address this issue

## Some Implications

### Undergraduate students

- When choosing a career route, students must understand the ethical expectations of their potential professions.*

### Psychologists supervising counselors

- Need to be aware of both **counseling and psychology's ethical codes** in order to ensure that both are upheld.*

### Agencies who hire both licensed psychologists and licensed counselors

- Awareness of discrepancies is necessary for cohesion and agency agreement.*

### Clients

- There could be **confusion** for clients who have seen **both psychologists and counselors**, as the two professions have different expectations for client-practitioner relationships.*

### General confusion

- From the outside looking in, one might believe a psychologist is violating an ethical principle when, in reality, those specifications do not exist in their ethical code.*