

Obligations and Duties

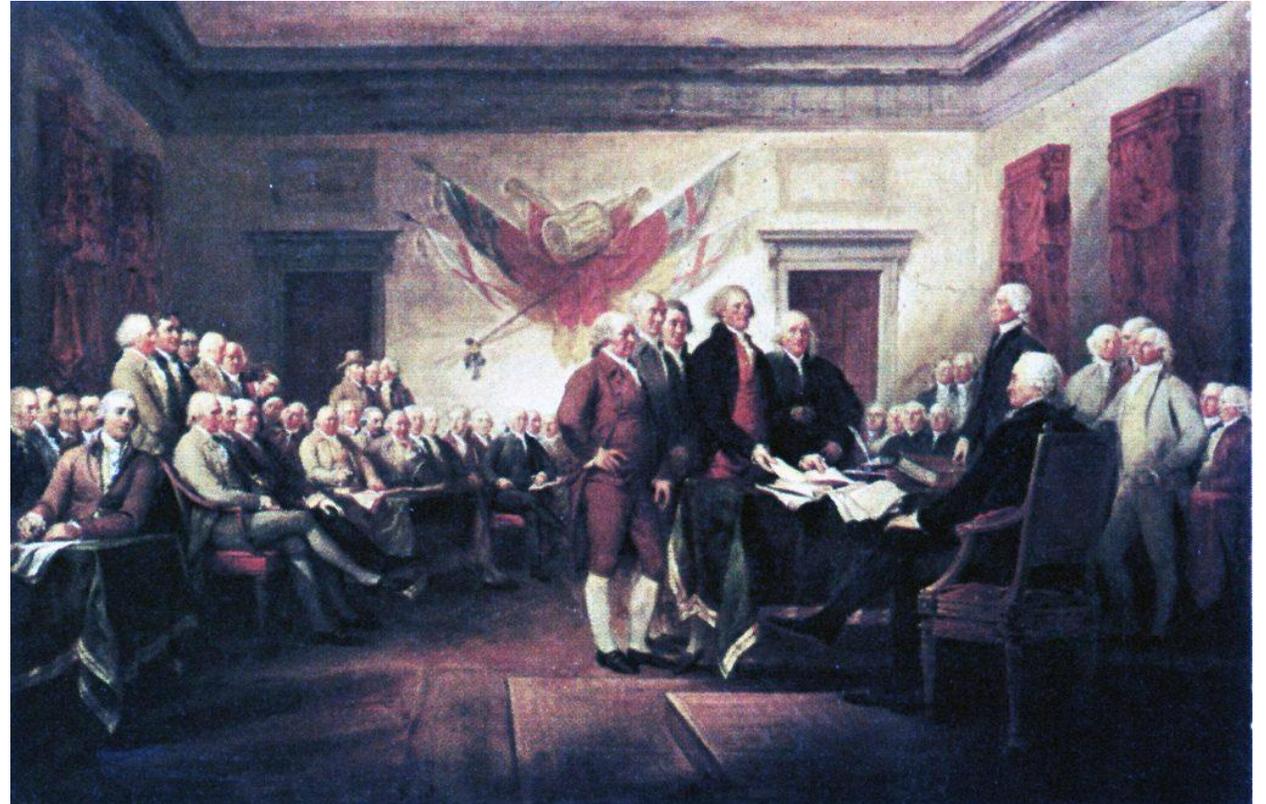
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Obligations and Duties

To whom do we owe obligations and duties?

In this presentation we look briefly at the different entities to which different codes argue that we owe allegiance, loyalty, or some other sort of obligation or duty.



<https://brewminate.com/obligation-to-society-loyalty-to-community/>

Title image: <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/assessing-the-duty-to-consult>

Self

arete
full potential
strength
virtue
wisdom
excellence
knowledge
adversity

- Most ethical codes abnegate serving or benefitting oneself, and where the self is concerned
- And yet, many of the ethical principles described in the code could be construed as the cultivation of a better self
- And some principles might be thought of as promoting some desirable attributes of self
- Processes include self-care, self-denial, self-respect

Less Fortunate

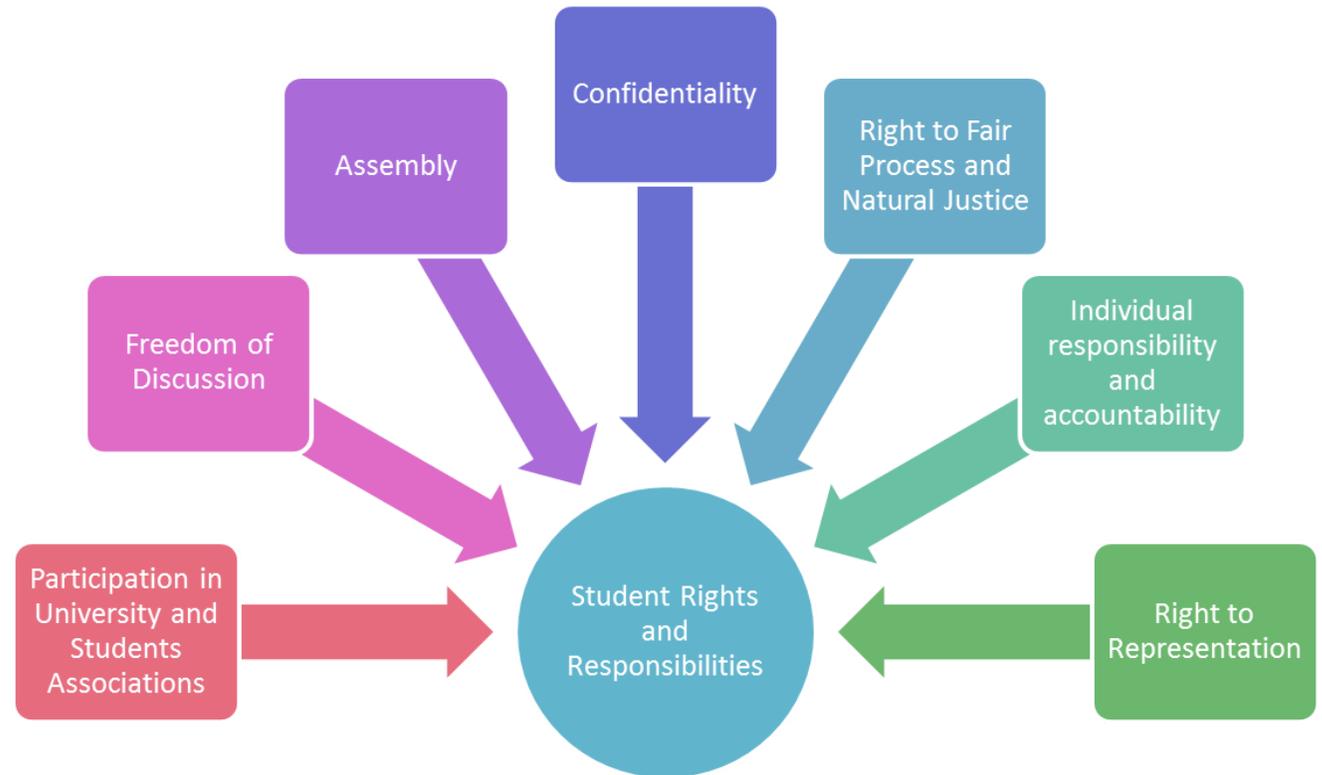
- Not very frequently referenced in codes of ethics, but:
 - Hammurabi's Code is the edict, "the strong may not oppress the weak" (Gilman, 2005:4n3).
 - Peter Singer's (2009) *The Life You Can Save*
- The resistance to considering such matters is telling

[https://www.reddit.com/r/wholesomememes/comments/fr6o1b/it is the duty of those more fortunate and/](https://www.reddit.com/r/wholesomememes/comments/fr6o1b/it_is_the_duty_of_those_more_fortunate_and/)



Students

- Codes for teachers or academics often specify obligations or duties to students, though in different ways:
 - Le code Soleil assigns a three-fold responsibility to teachers: to train the individual, the worker, and the citizen.
 - The National Education Association code urges teachers to “strive to help each student realize his or her potential as a worthy and effective member of society” (NEA, 1975)
- Student rights are often depicted as conditional



Children

- FTC: widespread “collection of personal information from even very young children without any parental involvement or awareness”
- IEEE: provisions on safety and security, confidentiality, and whistleblowing, noting specifically that “Adults have a responsibility to ensure that this unequal balance of power is not used for their personal advantage” (IEEE, 2017).
- Duty to report

<https://peelcas.org/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/events-listing/event/2021/03/09/peel-cas-events/a-community%27s-duty-to-report>



Parent or Guardian

Parents stand in two roles in codes of ethics.

- to act as a proxy for children with respect to matters of consent (Kay et al. 2012).
- as special interests that need to be protected
 - for example, an Indian code of ethics advises teachers to “refrain from doing any thing which may undermine students’ confidence in their parents or guardians”
- Duties to one’s own parents not mentioned in codes of ethics cited



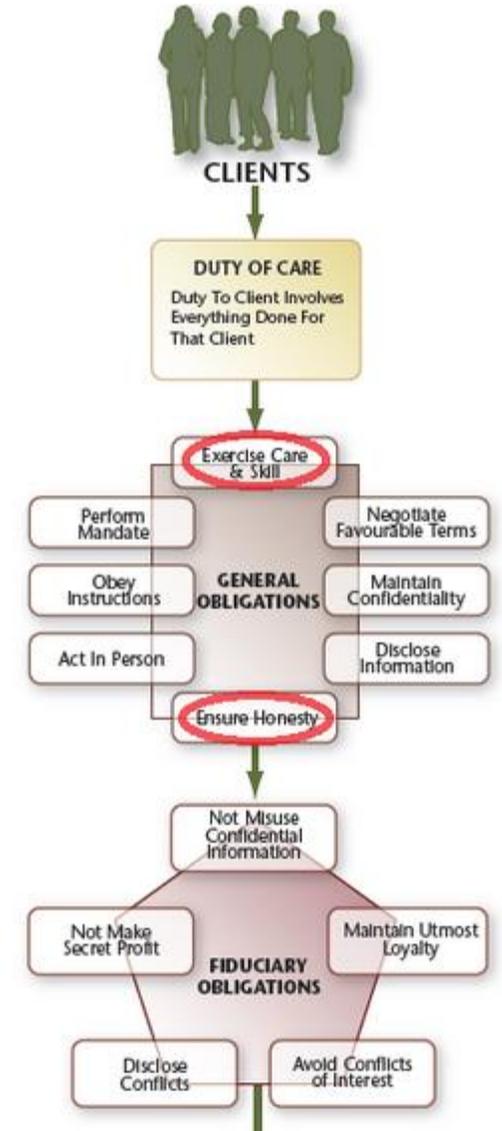
Family



- None of the ethical codes cited reference a duty to family (either one's own or to families in general)
- Yet there is a sense that there *is* an ethical value along the lines of 'family first'

Client

- In many ethical codes the first and often only duty is to the client
 - “special obligations between one party, often with power or the ability to exercise discretion that impacts on the other party, who may be vulnerable” (Wagner Sidlofsky, 2020).
- In health care the needs of the client are often paramount.
- There is ambiguity in the concept of client
 - E.g. is the duty to the client because the client is the one paying the bills?



<https://www.oreablog.com/index.php/recap-duties-to-clients-and-customers/>

Research Subject

- Research ethics codes commonly describe a duty of the researcher to the research subject
- In the field of data research and analytics this principle is often retained. Also in marketing, journalism.
- The Open University code asserts that “students should be engaged as active agents in the implementation of learning analytics (OU, 2014:4.3.2).



Employer



- Public service employees are not surprisingly obligated to their employer.
- The same sometimes holds true in the case of ethical codes for teachers.
- The same may apply for employees in the private sector, especially in IT, journalism

Employee

- No corresponding duty to employee appears in the ethical codes
- Duties to employees are specified in labour codes

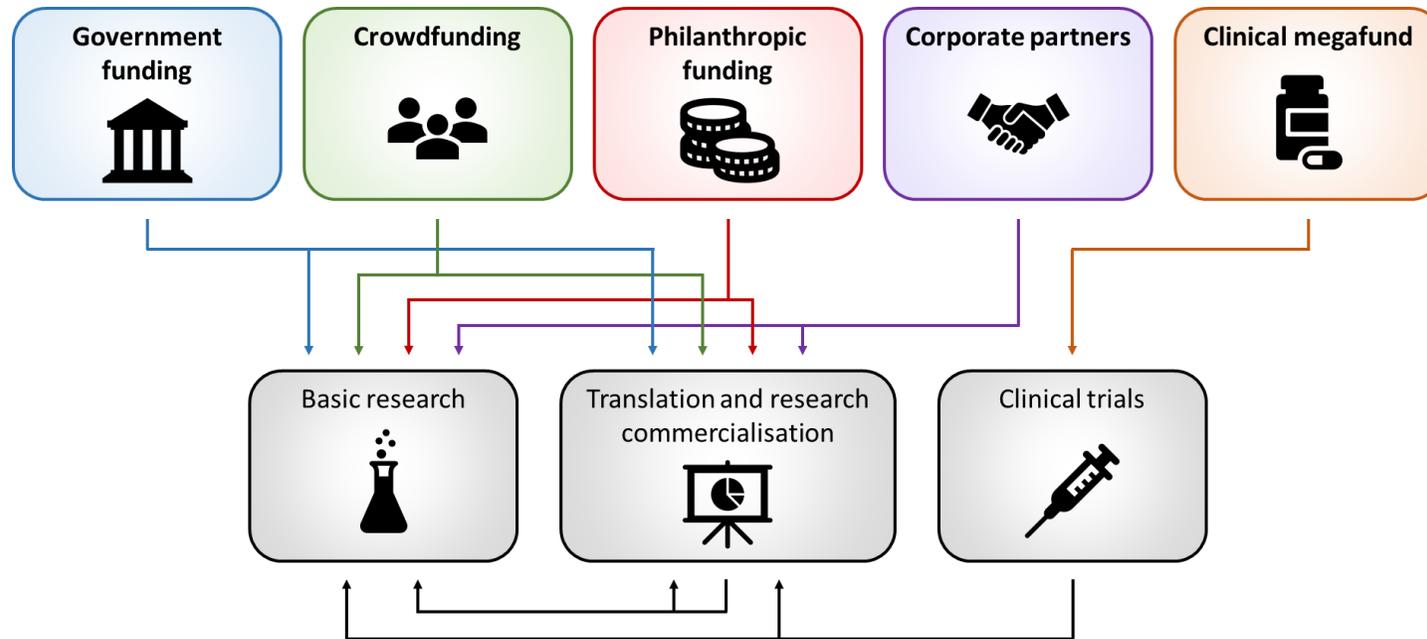


It is the employer's duty to manage all risk in the workplace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djDYObcKfKE>

Funder

- Even funders may make a claim on the duties of the researcher (Dingwell, et.al., 2017).



Colleagues

- The same may apply for employees in the private sector.
- “If the majority of members of a profession follow the standards, the profession will have a good reputation and members will generally benefit.” (Weil, 2008).



Stakeholders



- The term 'stakeholders' is sometimes used without elaboration to indicate the presence of a general duty or obligation
- 'Stakeholder' expands on the concept of 'stockholder' and is intended to represent a wider body of interests to which a company's management ought to be obligated (SRI, 1963).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stakeholder_theory

<https://bohatala.com/types-of-stakeholders-and-their-roles/>

Publishers and Content Producers

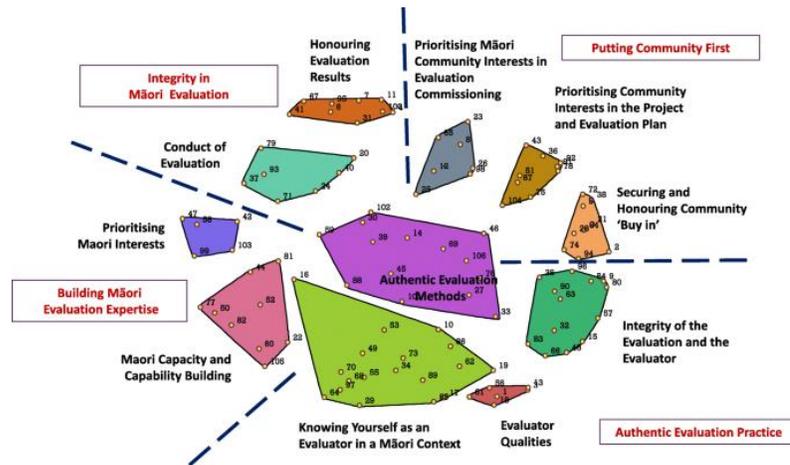
- Librarians are subject to special obligations to publishers, according to some codes.
- This responsibility is extended in other fields as a prohibition against plagiarism (EUI, 2019; BACB, 2014; SPJ, 2014; NUJ, 2011; NYT, 2017; etc.) and taking credit for the work of others (AITP, 2017; IEEE, 2020; BACB, 2014; etc.).

<https://www.perspective-collective.com/side-hustlers-perspective/stop-plagiarism>



Specific Cultural Groups

- This appears nowhere in any of the codes of ethics
- However, it can be identified in specific contexts
 - E.g. The duty to consult with indigenous peoples



<https://equityhealthj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12939-019-1094-z>

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/free-prior-and-informed-consent-protecting-indigenous>

<https://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/assessing-the-duty-to-consult>

Society

- References to a responsibility to society are scarce, but they do exist.
 - BERA (2018) argues for a responsibility to serve the public interest
 - The ‘Nolan principles’, (CSPL, 1995) state “Holders of public office are accountable to the public
 - the last two of the Computer Ethics Institute’ Ten Commandments’ recommend computer professionals “think about the social consequences” and to “ensure consideration and respect for other humans” (CEI, 1992).



<https://www.gesonline.com/about/corporate-social-responsibility>

God, Law, King and Country

There is not an ethical duty to obey an unethical law, but...

- Some codes nonetheless include respect for the law
- IATP used to say “I shall uphold my nation and shall honor the chosen way of life of my fellow citizens”
 - cited (in EDUCAUSE Review) as recently as 2017 (Woo, 2017).



Environment

The environment is rarely mentioned in ethical codes

- obligations to “society, its members, and the environment surrounding them” (ACM, 2018)
- “societal and environmental wellbeing - including sustainability and environmental friendliness, social impact, society and democracy” (AI HLEG, 2019).

