

Dual Relationships: The Importance, Ethical Standards, and Resolution between a Psychologist's  
and Client's Relationship

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A dual relationship occurs when a psychologist functions in a professional role and another significant role in a relationship (Moleski & Kiselica, 2005; Syme, 2006). Dual relationships have long been a topic of controversy in counselling psychology and are particularly important to consider as they may result in complex situations and unique challenges for psychologists (Gross, 2005; Younggren & Gottlieb, 2004). These dual roles may be professional (e.g., employer, supervisor, teacher), emotional or personal (e.g., friend, relative, acquaintance) in nature (Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). Regardless of the type, dual relationships present with a range of potential challenges for a psychologists and their clients (Gross, 2005). Though some dual relationships may be of a sexual or romantic nature, this paper will focus on non-sexual dual relationships between counselling and/or educational psychologists and their clients, examine why dual relationships are important, the ethical standards and principles relevant to dual relationships, a sample dual relationship dilemma, and the impact of personal values on the ethical decision making process regarding a dual relationship.

### **The Importance of Dual Relationships in Counselling Psychology**

Dual relationships include those that may only occur once or be of a continuous experience, and often involve power differential and unclear defined role understanding between the psychologist and client (Gross, 2005; Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). Since all relationships have inherent expectations, rights, and obligations, difficulties are particularly likely to arise in dual relationships when the expectations attached to one role conflicts another (Gross, 2005). The more ways a psychologist and client blend their professional and personal boundaries, the higher the risk of an inevitable form of client exploitation occurring (Gross, 2005).

It is important to recognize that some dual relationships are beneficial to the counselling process, and to refuse counselling to an individual with whom another relationship may be

present would be detrimental (Clipson, 2005; Gross, 2005; Moleski & Kiselica, 2005; Syme, 2006). It is also vital to recognize that certain dual relationships are unavoidable (Gross, 2005). Isolated or rural communities often expect familiarity with their community members, and when a psychologist segregates themselves away from community activities or groups to avoid probable dual relationships, the community may become untrustworthy of that psychologist (Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). Certain cultural communities deem gift giving as a sign of gratitude and by refusing such a gift you are actually insulting the client and damaging the psychologist/client relationship (Gross, 2005; Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). Another situation may be that the psychologist is familiar with specific disabilities, such as hearing impaired, and are the only psychologist in the area who is able to communicate with a client in American Sign Language or Signing Exact English. To refuse treatment as a means to avoid a dual relationship is merely trading one ethical concern for another (Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). The challenge in such situations is to ensure the needs of the client are addressed, confidentiality is maintained, and the client's comfort level is monitored to ensure the existence of a dual relationship is not harmful to their well being and progress (Gross, 2005).

No matter whether a dual relationship is initiated by choice or chance, each has the potential for issues to arise. Many psychologists indicate that dual relationships should be approached with caution as the potential for a conflict of interest and exploitation of the client could easily occur (Younggren & Gottlieb, 2004; Syme, 2006). Numerous factors, including the point at which the dual relationship began (e.g., prior to, during, or after therapy), the motivation of the dual relationship, the client's diagnosis or presenting concern, and the roles and obligations associated with the secondary role, can influence the nature of the dual relationship (Gross, 2005; Zur, 2007). Therefore, factors need to be evaluated to determine whether the dual

relationship will be beneficial or harmful to the counselling relationship and outcome (Gross, 2005). Since a psychologist is responsible for the well being of the client, these questions should be broached prior to any consequences of the dual relationship taking effect (Gross, 2005).

Though the psychologist must place the best interest of the client first, it is important that they also acknowledge any emotional conflicts, personal needs, or factors that may interfere with their ability to remain objective when making decisions related to dual relationships (Clipson, 2005; Gross, 2005). One concern a psychologist should be aware of is that the rate of committing errors in judgement when addressing dilemmas or decisions involving dual relationships are much more likely to occur than those involving other relationships (Clipson, 2005; Gross, 2005). Though there are specific standards relating to dual relationships in the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (Canadian Psychological Association [CPA], 2000) and in the College of Alberta Standards of Practice (College of Alberta [CAP], 2005), the decision to engage in a dual relationship ultimately comes down to the ethical decision making of the individual psychologist in their determination for what is in the best interest of the client (Clipson, 2005; Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). Therefore, it is vitally important that psychologists familiarize and utilize the relevant ethical principles and standards, case examples, ethical judgment, and consultation practices in order to sift through the complexities inherent in each dual relationship they may encounter (Clipson, 2005).

### **Moral Principles, Ethical Principles, and Standards Relevant to Dual Relationships**

#### **Moral Principles Relating to Dual Relationships**

There a number of ethical principles and standards psychologists are to refer to when faced with a dual relationship. Particularly relevant to the ethical standards regarding dual

relationships are the moral principles of autonomy and nonmaleficence (Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). Both of these moral principles play a crucial role in determining the impact an additional relationship between a psychologist and client will have in their relationships.

Autonomy refers to an individual's right to make choices about self determination and the freedom to do so from the control of others (Kitchener, 1984; Moleski & Kiselica, 2005; Ryan, & Deci, 2006). Ryan and Deci (2006) concluded from their research that autonomy is a significant factor in the development and enhancement of personality functioning and well-being. Moleski & Kiselica (2005) also indicate that the degree for potential destructiveness may be directly related to the degree of autonomy lost by a client. An individual's right to privacy is dependent on the assumption that autonomous individuals have the right to make autonomous decisions regarding their own lives and the information relevant to it (Kitchener, 1984). However, autonomy does not imply unlimited freedom, as individuals do not have the freedom to harm others or deprive others of their rights (Kitchener, 1984). Nonmaleficence involves a psychologist's responsibility to avoid behaviours that cause harm or have the potential to do so (Kitchener, 1984; Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). In keeping with this moral principle, psychologists weigh the potential for harm to the client when consider whether to engage or not engage in a secondary relationship with a client (Kitchener, 1984; Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). The psychologist must assess all the potential issues from the perspective of the client's best interest rather than merely consider the dual relationship from their own (Moleski & Kiselica, 2005)

### **Principles and Standards Relating to Dual Relationships**

In addition to the relevant moral principles of autonomy and nonmaleficence, dual

relationships also relate to many specific principles and standards promoted in the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (Canadian Psychological Association [CPA], 2000). All four principles depicted in the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists emphasize points that are central to psychologists making decisions regarding dual relationships and provide some direction about how to proceed should a dual relationship dilemma occur. However, it is crucial for psychologists to be cognizant that ethics codes are always necessary, but not completely sufficient, when addressing concerns regarding the complexity and uniqueness of individualized dual relationships (Schank & Skovholt, 2006).

***Principle I: Respect for the dignity of persons.*** In demonstrating respect for the dignity of persons psychologists considering or involved in dual relationship need to be cognizant of the fact that each client is an end in him or herself, not an object as a means to an end (CPA, 2000). Psychologist must examine and determine the motivation of their choice to engage in a dual relationship as being either driven by a genuine desire to benefit the client or a choice made to benefit themselves at the expense of the client (Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). Therefore, Schank and Skovholt (2006) recommend that psychologist continually ask themselves whose needs are being met through the dual relationship, theirs or the client's?

Demonstrating respect for each client's right to the moral principles of autonomy and nonmaleficence is vitally important when engaging in a dual relationship. The process of informed consent is not only necessary in ensuring these moral principles are met, it also ensures the boundaries and nature of both the professional and secondary relationship are collaboratively agreed upon and understood (Schank & Skovholt, 2006; Zur, 2007). Whether the dual relationship is unavoidable, mandatory, or elective, psychologists must ensure that they receive informed consent from their clients. Ethical standards I.16 and I.17 ensures that consent is

sought in a manner which provides the client to have an active and collaborative role in deciding whether the dual relationship matches with their expectations and respects their own individual rights (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard I.24 ensures that the purpose and nature of the secondary relationship is understood and issues relating to mutual responsibilities, possible risks and benefits, confidentiality, and alternative options are also discussed and understood by the client (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard I.25 ensures that if the nature of the dual relationship should change in any way during the professional relationship, psychologists must inform the client of the implications of the change, and once again gain the consent of the client prior to continuing with the professional relationship (CPA, 2000).

Confidentiality is another value under the first principle of Respect the Dignity of Persons which is relevant to psychologists engaged in a dual relationship (CPA, 2000). As each dual relationship may differ slightly in its situation and nature, it is critical that psychologist be cognizant of ethical standard I.43, which conveys that information about the client remain confidential throughout the services being provided (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard I.44 ensures clarification regarding the measures that will be put in place to protect a client's confidentiality is discussed and understood while obtaining informed consent for services provided by the psychologist (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard I.45 also ensures that a psychologist will only share confidential information with others depicted through informed consent, unless required by law or due to a threat of serious harm to themselves or others (CPA, 2000). Dilemmas related to confidentiality in dual relationships are particularly relevant for psychologists working in rural or isolated communities, as dual relationships are much more likely to occur, and in many situations, unavoidable (Gross, 2005; Moleski & Kiselica, 2005; Schank & Skovholt, 2006) .

***Principle II: Responsible caring.*** Psychologist who find themselves in a dual relationship

with a client need to demonstrate a high level of caution in ensuring that such a relationship will benefit, or at least not harm, the client (CPA, 2000). Ethical standards II.1 and II.2 endorse the psychologist's responsibility to distinguish the potential harm and benefits of a dual relationship for the client, and proceed with such a relationship only if the benefits outweigh the potential harm for the client (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard II.3 relates to dual relationships in that the psychologists must accept the responsibility of any harm done to the client resulting from the dual relationship (CPA, 2000). Ethical standards II.13 and II.14 relate to dual relationships in that psychologists must utilize their knowledge to assess and weigh the possible short and long terms risks against the benefits for the client (CPA, 2000). Factors which could influence the decision making process regarding the welfare of the client whom the psychologist may be involved or at risk of being involved in a dual relationship are the client's diagnosis, the type of dual relationship, the context of the relationship, cultural values, the psychologist's theoretical orientation, and the timing of the dual relationship (Gross, 2005; Zur, 2007).

Due to the diverse types of dual relationships, it is crucial that the psychologist utilizes their ethical judgment in determining whether each dual relationship they may become involved in is actually maximizing the benefits for the client involved. Ethical standard II.22 relates to dual relationships in that it is the psychologist's responsibility to monitor and evaluate the effects of the dual relationship has on the professional relationship, and to inform and discuss with the client any changes or concerns with the client (CPA, 2000). If a psychologist deems that the dual relationship is not benefiting the client, and the dual relationship cannot be changed or risk of harm cannot be undone, ethical standard II.21 indicates that the psychologist has the option of referring the client to another psychologist to continue with services being delivered (CPA, 2000).



Psychologists must be cognizant of the influence they may have over their client's ability to make personal decisions and maintain their autonomy when involved in a dual relationship with their psychologist (Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). Ethical standard II.27 depicts the power differential between psychologist and client during a professional relationship and warns against sexual intimacy with a client; however, this standard relates to non-sexual dual relationships in that it is still crucial for psychologists to recognize that the power relationship between a psychologist and client can greatly influence the client's ability to make personal decisions (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard II.29 relates to dual relationships in that psychologists must be cognizant to not engage or continue dual relationships that may place a client at risk of harm (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard II.37 relates to dual relationships in that psychologists must be able to terminate a dual relationship if evidence reveals that the dual relationship has, or has the potential to, become harmful to the client (CPA, 2000).

***Principle III: Integrity in relationships.*** It is vitally important for psychologists who are considering or already involved in a dual relationship to ensure the services they are providing demonstrate explicit and implicit mutual expectations of integrity (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard III.10 relates to any relationship, whether it be dual or not, the importance for psychologists to be cognizant of their own personal experiences, attitudes, values, and social context in order to determine how their individual differences, stressors, and experiences may influence their activities and decision making skills within each specific relationship they may be involved in (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard III.14 indicates that psychologists need to be as open and straightforward as possible about the mutual concerns and responsibilities within a dual relationship, the purpose and nature of both relationships, and the potential conflicts that may develop throughout the dual relationship (CPA, 2000).

Any situation that interferes with a psychologist's ability to make sound judgments and influence one's integrity in a dual relationship can develop into a conflict of interest for both the psychologist and client (Clipson, 2005; Moleski & Kiselica, 2005). Ethical standard III.31 indicates that it is important for the psychologist to be cognizant of any relationship which may develop into a conflict of interest, such as a situation that has the potential to motivate psychologist to act in ways that address their own personal, political, financial, or business needs at the expense of the client (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard III.33 states that such dual relationships that may present conflict of interest should be avoided when possible; however, ethical standard III.34 dictates that when such dual relationships cannot be avoided, consultation and/or supervision for the duration of the dual relationship should be sought as a means of establishing safeguards to ensure the best interest of the client is provided (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard III.35 depicts that psychologists must inform all parties involved in a dual relationship of any perceived or occurring conflict of interest, and then proceed through an ethical decision making process to determine a resolution that is most beneficial for the client (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard III.38 relates to dual relationships in that psychologists should always seek consultation when faced with a dilemma to assist in being as objective and unbiased as possible when determining a resolution in a conflict of interest situation (CPA, 2000).

***Principle IV: Responsibility to society.*** In addition to reflecting upon one's own values before entering into a dual relationship, it is also important for psychologists to be cognizant of the client's and community's values in the decision making process (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard IV.16 dictates that psychologists need to convey respect for the client's community's mores, social customs, and cultural expectation prior to making a final decision about whether to engage in a dual relationship or not (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard IV.8 also depicts that

psychologists in dual relationships should engage in regular monitoring of activities to assess the impact of the relationship on the client and the community to ensure that such activities are ethically appropriate, beneficial, and not harmful in any way (CPA, 2000).

### **Standards of Practice Relating to Dual Relationships**

In Alberta, the Health Professions ACT (HPA) authorizes Council to adopt Standards of Practice for the profession of psychology (CAP, 2005). It is important to note that the Code of Ethics is considered aspirational, whereas the Standards of Practice are more definitive in nature and translates certain aspects of the Code into behavioural definitions to enforceable rules for the professional conduct of psychologists (CAP, 2005). Therefore, it is equally important for psychologist to be familiar with the Standards of Practice as it is these rules which are utilized in disciplinary hearings to determine whether a psychologist's conduct is deemed unprofessional or not (CAP, 2005).

Psychologists who are considering or already within a dual relationship need to be aware of the sections within the Standards of Practice which relate to informed consent (standard 2) and confidentiality (standards 18 to 32), as well as the section which addresses both sexual and non-sexual dual relationships (standard 15) (CAP, 2005). Standards 15(1) (2c) and (3) depict that psychologists are not to engage in or continue professional relationships with clients who are involved in a current or previous conflict of interest which could potentially be exploitive of the client, harmful to the services provided by the psychologist, or impair the judgment of the psychologist (CAP, 2005). Standards 15(4a to 4d) recognize that in certain incidences, such as isolated small communities, incidences involving crisis, and psychologist's special attributes and skills, psychologists may need to proceed with a possible harmful dual relationship (CAP, 2005).

However, standards 15(5a to 5c) depict that if psychologists are unable to avoid a possible harmful dual relationship, they need to ensure that the client is informed and cognizant of the possible consequences of the conflicting relationship, keep detailed records of informed consent and description of the relationship, and consult with other psychologists regarding the dual relationship (CAP, 2005).

### **Dual Relationship Ethical Dilemma and Resolution**

#### **Sample Dual Relationship Dilemma**

I am currently employed as the only school psychologist with a Catholic school division in a small urban community in Alberta. My school division employs the Response to Intervention model (RTI), and I am actively involved in all three tiers in addressing the needs of students who are struggling in academics and behaviour. I am currently involved in the development and monitoring of a behaviour intervention program for a ten year old boy named Chris who is struggling with frustration and behavioural issues at school. Chris is a good friend of my son's. They attend the same school and often socialize together outside of school. Chris is within the final tier of RTI and his school is requesting further psycho-educational assessment to determine the next steps to proceed in the areas of his struggles. Chris' parents have agreed with the school to discuss further assessment even though they disagree with the school's perception of the seriousness of their son's behavioural issues. Chris' parents have indicated that they are comfortable with me performing the assessments, as they know me personally and are aware that I have been involved in the development and monitoring of his intervention programming at school. They feel that my knowledge of both his academics and outside school behaviour will provide me with further background information to utilize during the assessment process. I am uncomfortable with proceeding with the assessment as I recognize the conflict of

interest this dual relationship could have on my interpretation and reporting of the assessment results.

### **Ethical Decision Making Process for the Dual Relationship Dilemma**

In examining the dilemma there are many concerns that I will need to address. First, I realize that my decision to administer psycho-educational assessments with Chris has the potential to impact Chris, his family, myself, and possibly even my own son in regards to his friendship with Chris. As I feel this situation could be a conflict of interest within a dual relationship, I need to refer to the ethical principles and standards of the Code of Ethics for Psychologists which are relevant to this situation and will consult with colleagues prior to making any decisions.

Before I meet with Chris and his parents to discuss psycho-educational, I must ensure that whatever decision I make reflects Chris' best interests and not my own. Therefore, I must reflect on standards II.1 and II.2 to examine the extent to which my choice to whether or not to engage in the dual relationship is driven by a genuine desire to benefit Chris or to benefit myself, as well as determine the potential harms engaging or not engaging in a dual relationship could have on Chris (CPA, 2000). I must determine if Chris' friendship with my son and familiarity with me make it difficult for him to be comfortable, open, and honest throughout the assessment process, which could affect the validity of the testing results. I need to be cognizant if a choice to not perform the psycho-educational assessments is due to my own discomfort or desire to avoid relaying possible results indicating symptoms of a behavioural disorder to a family we enjoy socializing with. I must also take into consideration Chris' parent's perception if I decide not to perform the assessments myself, but refer Chris to another educational psychologist. Also,

I must take into account if the risks inherent in this dual relationship outweigh the risks of Chris not receiving psycho-educational assessments if the family is not willing to accept a referral to another educational psychologist.

I need to address ethical standard III.10 and be cognizant of any possible attitudes, biases, or preconceived belief I may have regarding Chris' behaviour which may influence my interpretations of the assessments I would be conducting with him (CPA, 2000). I am familiar with how both the school and his parents view Chris' behaviour and have witnessed outbursts on several occasions both at school and in interactions with my own son, and I have to admit to myself that I do suspect that there may be an underlying behavioural disorder which has not been properly addressed yet. This preconceived suspicion may influence how I interpret his responses during any behavioural assessments I may conduct with him. In accordance to ethical standard III.38 I will seek consultation with another school psychologists from the Public school system to ensure any bias or preconceived beliefs I may have regarding Chris' behaviour is not influencing my decision on whether or not to enter into this dual relationship (CPA, 2000). In accordance with ethical standard III.14, I must be as open and straightforward as possible with Chris' parents about the dual relationship by clearly stating the mutual concerns and responsibilities, specifying the nature of both relationships, and the potential conflicts that may arise from the dual relationship (CPA, 2000). Though I would not state any preconceived suspicions I may have regarding Chris' behaviour, I must ensure that his parents are aware that though being familiar with Chris could be beneficial during the assessment process, it could also influence my interpretation of the results.

Informed consent procedures will be crucial to the assessment process and I will need to obtain it prior to engaging in a dual relationship with Chris and his parents. Ethical standards

I.16 and I.17 depict that I must ensure the informed consent provides Chris and his parents with an opportunity to have an active and collaborative role in deciding whether or not the dual relationship respects Chris' rights and matches their expectations about the purpose and nature of the assessments I will be conducting (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard I.24 will also be consulted in that Chris and his parents understand the nature of both our professional and personal relationships will need to remain separate (CPA, 2000). Possible issues concerning each of our mutual responsibilities relating to our possible professional and personal relationships, possible risks and benefits of me conducting psycho-educational assessments on our personal relationship and our sons' relationship, and alternative options need to be thoroughly discussed and understood before obtaining consent for assessment.

It is vitally important that Chris and his parents clearly understand and agree with issues of confidentiality if we are going to engage in a dual relationship. Ethical standard I.45 ensures that any information gained through the assessment process will be shared only with the individuals Chris' parents provide informed consent to do so; therefore, they will not need to be concerned that my son, other family members, or staff not agreed upon will gain anything about the assessment process from me (CPA, 2000). Ethical standard I.44 depicts that it is crucial for me to discuss with Chris and his parent what measures will be taken to protect Chris' confidentiality (CPA, 2000). This may include ensuring we do not discuss assessment results outside our professional relationship environment; therefore, they need not be concerned that I will mention my professional relationship with them or assessment results while engaging in personal socializing activities.

### **Resolution of Dual Relationship Dilemma**

After careful consideration of the pertinent issues and relevant ethical standards, I have determined two options to assist in resolving this dilemma. Since I believe there are many concerns that could arise from the dual relationship, the first option consists of me referring Chris to another educational psychologist to have the psycho-educational assessments conducted. Though I am the only educational psychologist for my school division, I consult and collaboratively work together with an educational psychologist from the Public school division in our community. Since we work in a small urban community, our two school divisions have permitted us to assess children from either school division from time to time as a means of avoiding dual relationships. To my knowledge, the other school psychologist does not have a personal relationship with Chris or his family, but that would need to be confirmed with Chris' parents or psychologist.

If however, Chris and his family insist that either I perform the assessments or they will not pursue assessments option, I must have a discussion with them regarding my concerns and the potential benefits and hazards of engaging in a dual relationship. Before commencing with the assessment process, I will thoroughly address all the issues I foresee arising and establish safeguards. It will be vitally important to ensure that Chris and his parents understand informed consent and confidentiality, and I will utilize ethical standard III.34 and seek consultation and monitoring of the assessments I conduct to ensure the results are not influenced by any preconceived thoughts I may have regarding Chris' behaviour (CPA, 2000).

### **Interaction of Personal Values with Ethical Concerns in Dual Relationship**

Due to the diverse combinations of possible dual relationships and outcomes, the ethical standards can only provide guidance on how to address possible dilemmas resulting from some



dual relationships; therefore, psychologists need to take into account that their personal values and opinions will have some influence on their ethical decision making processes (Clipson, 2005). Personal values and self interest have the potential to influence even the questions psychologists may ask, how they ask them, and the methods they employ to gather information. As a result, psychologists need to be cognizant of how their emotional conflicts and personal needs may interfere or influence their judgment and objectivity while making decisions regarding dual relationships (Clipson, 2005; Schank & Skovholt, 2006).

Personally, I feel there are a couple of ways my personal values may influence my ability to make objective decisions regarding dual relationships, even with the dilemma presented in this paper. Primarily, I believe my experience and background as a special needs teacher within small rural communities greatly influences my assessment of the risks and benefits inherent in dual relationships. I already insist on student and family's informed consent prior to beginning any kind of intervention programming or assessment, and am vigilant in ensuring everyone is informed of the possible risks and benefits of each program or reasoning for assessment. However, what I have found the most difficult is ensuring confidentiality remains safeguarded in some of these relationships. I have had experiences of visiting with friends on the phone, in stores or other community centers, and discovered the conversation leading into the parent requesting more information about their child's assessment results or how their programming is progressing. I find myself instantly turning on my 'professional teacher face' and reminding the parent that I am unable to proceed with such conversations in uncontrolled public domains due to concerns about confidentiality. It can be stressful on both the personal and professional relationships.

Personally, I recognize that I am uncomfortable in conducting assessments with children

who are friends with my own children or are children of friends of mine. Even if I can determine that a dual relationship would be beneficial to the client, or at least have no serious risks, I feel additional stress and pressure that possible assessment results will be difficult to inform these parents about (Clipson, 2005). What if psycho-educational results indicate probable slow learning cognitive capacity or suicidal tendencies surface through gathered assessment data? These findings can be difficult enough to present to parents whom you do not have a personal connection to, let alone to parents whom you do.

Schank & Skovholt (2006) discussed the importance of psychologists being honest with themselves when identifying their weaknesses and biases to ensure the choices they are making reflect the best interest of their client over their own. However, it is important to remember that as psychologists we are not expected to be value free, but to be aware of how our values and backgrounds may affect others and the decisions we make related to them (Schank & Skovholt, 2006). Hence why consulting with other psychologists can be extremely beneficial when a psychologist becomes aware of a possible dual relationship dilemma.

Given the personal conflicts I have identified, my approach to the sample dilemma may not have changed. However, I feel any changes would be minimal because in accordance with principles and ethical standards from the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, I considered the impact of my personal values and stressor within the ethical decision making process. Nevertheless, here are the ways I believe my personal values may have impacted my approach and resolution of the dilemma. I feel that the stress created by the possible confusion of roles within the dual relationship would have led me to immediately recommend a referral to another educational psychologist to have assessments conducted on a child who was a personal friend of my own son. The awareness that I already had preconceived ideas of Chris possibly

having a behavioural disorder would have influenced how I interpreted assessment results; therefore, I could never be sure if the results were completely reliable or valid. I feel that if I relied solely on my personal values, I would not have provided the client with the best possible service. However, if the family was absolutely adamant that they would not approve psycho-educational assessments from another educational psychologist, I would proceed with the dual relationship, but with consultation with a colleague.

### **Conclusion**

Dual relationships are often unavoidable, especially in smaller or isolated communities, and present with a number of concerns for counselling and educational psychologists (Syme, 2006). Due to the wide range of situations and types of dual relationships that could develop, they require careful and thoughtful consideration by psychologists. While the Canadian Code of Ethics for psychologists depict some standards related to dual relationships, it is clear each psychologists must exercise a high level of ethical judgment when faced with a dual relationship dilemma.

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