There are increasing concerns about exclusionary behaviors and lack of diversity in the nursing profession. Exclusionary behaviors, which may include incivility, bullying, and workplace violence, discriminate and isolate individuals and groups who are different, whereas inclusive behaviors encourage diversity. To address inclusion and diversity in nursing, this article offers a code of conduct. This code of conduct builds on existing nursing codes of ethics and applies to nursing students and nurses in both educational and practice settings. Inclusive behaviors that are demonstrated in nurses’ relationships with patients, colleagues, the profession, and society are described. This code of conduct provides a basis for measurable change, empowerment, and unification of the profession. Recommendations, implications, and a pledge to action are discussed.

(Index words: Nursing; Diversity; Inclusion; Code; Conduct; Pledge) J Prof Nurs 0:1–6, 2016. © 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
group (Neal, 2003). However, elitism and disunity began
to take root early. Even in 1896, Lavinia Dock, one of the
earliest nursing leaders, cautioned nurses to avoid
appearing cliquish when considering the design of a
national nursing organization (Dock, 1991). By 1911,
the ANA and the National League for Nursing
Education (now the NLN) selected their membership
primarily from nurses from the middle and upper
classes that had been educated at the elite schools.
“Working nurses” felt disenfranchised and questioned
how much these nurse leaders really understood about
patient care (Neal Boylan, 2015).

Added to this chasm between strictly academic nurses
and strictly clinical nurses is the culture of horizontal
violence that is so prevalent in the literature within
academic and clinical organizations and between nurses
in the same organization (ANA, 2015a; Cipriano, 2015).
Horizontal violence is a term that has been used in nursing
to describe aggressive and hostile behaviors directed
horizontally within an oppressed group (Duffy, 1995).
Nurses provide professional and compassionate care to
their patients but struggle to care for each other. The
ANA’s new incivility policy (2015a) helps frame this
discussion by highlighting the prevalence of these
behaviors.

The profession continues to have multiple points of entry
that also contributes to further fragmentation (Neal-Boylan,
2013). This disunity within the nursing profession has
widened during the last several decades and has
weakened the voice of nursing in decisions that impact
them. Nursing has emerged as both a vocation and
profession creating dissonance within the membership;
the result has been oppression, disempowerment, and
exclusivity. Exclusive behaviors include incivility and
workplace violence.

Within academic environments, competition between
tenured and tenure track faculty and a growing cadre of
adjuncts required to supplement them may lead to
behavior that is not conducive to moving forward. Similarly,
concerns about getting promoted or, in some
cases, rehired from year to year can magnify tensions
among instructional staff. These concerns about promotion
are mirrored within the clinical setting. Added to the
mix are new graduates who may expect more from the
experienced nurses with whom they work than they
have a right to expect resulting in resentment on both
sides (Neal-Boylan, 2013).

Values and Ethics

Core professional values have been documented in nursing
and support respect, dignity, autonomy, integrity, justice,
and altruism as common values in the profession (American
Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2008; ANA,
2015b; Horton, Tschudin, & Forget, 2007; International
Council of Nurses [ICN], 2012; Perry, 2005; Schmidt, 2014;
Shahriari, Mohammadi, Abbaszadeh, Bahrami, & Fooladi,
2012). AACN (2008) further defined each of those values.
Most notably, they identified integrity as “acting in
accordance with an appropriate code of ethics and accepted
standards of practice” (p. 27).

The ANA code of ethics (2015b) has helped professional
nurses identify core values and provide ethical
guidance for inclusive decision making. Nursing codes of
ethics outline important responsibilities and values of the
profession (Verpeet, Meulenbergs, & Gastmans, 2003).
In addition, nursing codes of ethics address relationships,
describe standards, and offer guidance for nurses when
making decisions (ANA, 2015b; Numminen, van der
Arend, & Leino-Kilpi, 2009).

The nursing profession should consider moving beyond
codes of ethics to a code of conduct based on
measurable behaviors. Some other professions, such as
lawyers and accountants, have established codes of
conduct (American Bar Association, 2016; American
Institute of Certified Public Accountants, 2014). Benner,
Sutphen, Leonard, and Day (2010) identified the need to
focus on ethical behaviors in nursing education. Pattison
(2001) argued that nursing codes of ethics fail to generate
ethical awareness and behaviors. Numminen et al. (2009)
found that nurses’ behaviors depended on personal
experience and environmental contexts rather than
nursing codes of ethics.

A code of conduct is a set of rules about how to behave and
do business with other people (Cambridge Dictionary,
2015). Codes of conduct provide explicit descriptions of
how ethical frameworks should be demonstrated in nursing
practice. Some health care organizations have clearly written
codes of conduct. For example, Kindred Healthcare (2010)
incorporated expected behaviors that apply to all aspects of
their operations into their code of conduct.

A code of conduct can include expectations for how
individuals treat others from diverse backgrounds.
Inclusive behaviors have been identified as a means to
increase diversity in education and business settings (Lee,
2007; Williams, Berger, & McLendon, 2005). The
Nursing and Midwifery Council of the United Kingdom
(2008) and The Nursing Council of New Zealand (2012)
have codes of conduct that address inclusion and
diversity. In addition, the Nursing Council of New
Zealand (2012) requires that nurses complete continuing
education on their written code of conduct.

Justifying a Code of Conduct for Inclusion
and Diversity

America is becoming increasingly diverse. The AACN
(2008, p. 37) defined diversity as “The range of human
variation, including age, race, gender, disability, ethnicity,
nationality, religious and spiritual beliefs, sexual
orientation, political beliefs, economic status, native
language, and geographical background.” Over 50% of
children one-year-old and younger are now from non-White racial and ethnic groups. One in three
Americans are members of a racial and/or ethnic
minority, and it is projected that by 2043 there will be
no majority population in the United States (The Sullivan
Alliance, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Leaders have
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