

Kottak, Conrad Phillip.  
2008. Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity. 12th edition. McGraw Hill.

## Appendix 2

# Ethics and Anthropology

As the main organization representing the breadth of anthropology (all four subfields, academic and applied dimensions), the American Anthropological Association believes that generating and appropriately using knowledge of the peoples of the world, past and present, is a worthy goal. The production of anthropological knowledge is a dynamic process involving different and ever-evolving approaches. The mission of the AAA is to advance anthropological research and encourage the spread of anthropological knowledge through publications, teaching, public education, and application. Part of that mission is to help educate AAA members about ethical obligations and challenges (<http://www.aaanet.org>).

As anthropologists conduct research and engage in other professional activities, ethical issues inevitably arise. Anthropologists have typically worked abroad, outside their own society. In the context of international contacts and cultural diversity, different value systems will meet, and often compete. To guide its members in making decisions involving ethics and values, the AAA offers a Code of Ethics. The most recent Code was approved in June 1998 and updated on March 31, 1999. The Code's preamble states that anthropologists have obligations to their scholarly field, to the wider society and culture, and to the human species, other species, and the environment. This Code's aim is to offer guidelines and to promote discussion and education. Although the AAA has investigated allegations of misconduct by anthropologists, it does not adjudicate such claims. The AAA also recognizes that anthropologists belong to multiple groups—including, perhaps, a family, a community, a religion, and other organizations—each of which may have its own ethical and moral rules. Because anthropologists can find themselves in complex situations and subject to more than one ethical code, the AAA Code provides a framework, not an ironclad formula, for making decisions.

The AAA wants its members to be attentive to ethical issues, and it urges anthropology departments to include ethical training in their curricula. The AAA Code addresses several contexts in which anthropologists work. Its main points about the ethical dimensions of research may be summarized.

Anthropologists should be open and honest about all dimensions of their research projects with funding agencies, colleagues, and all parties affected by the research. These parties should be informed about the purpose(s), potential impacts, and source(s) of support for the research. Anthropologists should disseminate the results of their research in an appropriate and timely way.

Researchers should not compromise anthropological ethics in order to conduct research. They should also pay attention to proper relations between themselves as guests and the host nations and communities where they work. The AAA does not advise anthropologists to avoid taking stands on issues. Indeed, the Code states that leadership in seeking to shape actions and policies may be as ethically justifiable as inaction.

Here are some of the headings and subheadings of the Code:

### A. RESPONSIBILITY TO PEOPLE AND ANIMALS

1. The primary ethical obligation of the anthropologist is to the people, species, and materials they study. This obligation takes precedence over the goal of seeking new knowledge. It can also lead to the decision not to undertake, or to discontinue, research when ethical conflicts arise. This primary

ethical obligation—anthropology’s “prime directive”—entails:

Avoiding harm or wrong.

Understanding that the production of knowledge can have positive or negative effects on the people or animals worked with or studied.

Respecting the well-being of humans and non-human primates.

Working for the long-term conservation of the archaeological, fossil, and historical records.

Consulting actively with the affected individuals or group(s), with the goal of establishing a working relationship that will benefit all parties.

2. Researchers must do all they can to preserve the safety, dignity, and privacy of the people with whom they work. Anthropologists working with animals should not endanger their safety, psychological well-being, or survival.
3. Anthropologists should determine whether their hosts wish to remain anonymous or to receive recognition, and should try to comply with those wishes. Researchers should make clear to research participants that, despite the best efforts of the anthropologist, anonymity may be compromised or recognition fail to materialize.
4. Researchers must obtain the *informed consent* of affected parties. That is, prior to their agreement to participate, people should be told about the purpose, nature, and procedures of the research and its potential impact on them. Informed consent (agreement to take part in the research) should be obtained from anyone providing information, owning materials being studied, or otherwise having an interest that might be impacted by the research. Informed consent does not necessarily imply or require a written or signed form.
5. Researchers who develop ongoing relationships with individuals providing information or with hosts must continue to respect the obligations of openness and informed consent.
6. Anthropologists may gain personally from their work, but they should not exploit individuals, groups, animals, or cultural or biological materials. They should recognize their debt to the communities and societies in which they work and to the people with whom they work. They should reciprocate in appropriate ways.

## B. RESPONSIBILITY TO SCHOLARSHIP AND SCIENCE

1. Anthropologists should attempt to identify potential ethical conflicts and dilemmas when preparing proposals, and as projects proceed.
2. Anthropologists are responsible for the integrity and reputation of their field, of scholarship, and of science. They are subject to the general moral rules of scientific and scholarly conflict. They should not deceive or knowingly misrepresent (i.e., fabricate evidence, falsify, plagiarize). They should not attempt to prevent reporting of misconduct, or obstruct the scholarly research of others.
3. Anthropologists should do all they can to preserve opportunities for future researchers to follow them to the field.
4. To the extent possible, anthropologists should disseminate their findings to the scientific and scholarly community.
5. Anthropologists should consider all reasonable requests for access to their data and materials for purposes of research. They should preserve their data for use by posterity.

## C. RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PUBLIC

1. Anthropologists should strive to ensure that their findings are contextualized properly and used responsibly. Anthropologists should also consider the social and political implications of their conclusions. They should be honest about their qualifications and philosophical and political biases. They must be alert to possible harm their information might cause people with whom they work, or colleagues.
2. Anthropologists may move beyond disseminating research results to a position of advocacy. This is an individual decision, but not an ethical responsibility.

## D. ETHICS PERTAINING TO APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY

1. The same ethical guidelines apply to all anthropological work—academic and applied. Applied anthropologists should use their results appropriately (i.e., publi-

cation, teaching, program and policy development) within a reasonable time. Applied anthropologists should be honest about their skills and intentions. They should monitor the effects of their work on everyone affected.

2. In dealings with employers, applied anthropologists should be honest about their qualifications, abilities, and goals. The applied

anthropologist should review the aims and interests of the prospective employer, taking into consideration the employer's past activities and future goals. Applied anthropologists should not accept conditions contrary to professional ethics.

The full Code of Ethics, which is abbreviated and paraphrased here, is available at the AAA website (<http://www.aaanet.org>).