is important both to maximize benefits to research and minimize risks to research participants, realized as statements such as ‘Do no harm’, ‘Promote good’, and ‘Reduce risks’. The third principle, justice, is designed to ensure that procedures be reasonable, non-exploitative, and fairly administered.

Other ethics codes share the core of these principles, developing them in different ways. To take a single example, a recent revised statement on ethical conduct for research with humans by the Canadian Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics (December 2010) takes respect for the value of human dignity as its starting point and identifies three core principles, respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice. The policy statement acknowledges that these principles must be interpreted in the context of a particular community. It also stresses that concern for welfare includes physical, mental, and spiritual health, involving the quality of life in all its aspects.

Respect for persons, beneficence, justice, and welfare are far-reaching principles that likely receive general agreement cross-culturally, subject to local interpretation, and they frame the discussion that follows in this paper. Building on these principles, many ethics codes have been developed, and I turn to a discussion of some of these.

18.3 Understanding Ethics: Ethics Codes

In this section, I briefly summarize three ethics protocols, two written by academic societies and one written as a guide for health researchers doing research in Aboriginal communities in Canada.

I begin with the ethics code of the American Anthropological Association which has had an ethics code evolving over time. The paragraph below is the preamble to the latest version, approved in February 2009.

> Anthropological researchers, teachers and practitioners are members of many different communities, each with its own moral rules or codes of ethics. Anthropologists have moral obligations as members of other groups, such as the family, religion, and community, as well as the profession. They also have obligations to the scholarly discipline, to the wider ↳ society and culture, and to the human species, other species, and the environment. Furthermore, fieldworkers may develop close relationships with persons or animals with whom they work, generating an additional level of ethical considerations. In a field of such complex involvements and obligations, it is inevitable that misunderstandings, conflicts, and the need to make choices among apparently incompatible values will arise. Anthropologists are responsible for grappling with such difficulties and struggling to resolve them in ways compatible with the principles stated here.

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This code recognizes that there are different codes of ethics in different groups, and that anthropological researchers have moral obligations to the groups they work with. These responsibilities are developed more fully in later sections of the code: researchers have the responsibility to avoid harm or wrong, to respect the well-being of people, and to consult actively with affected individuals or groups with the goal of establishing a working relationship that can be beneficial to all involved. The preamble also introduces a second type of ethics: in addition to its stress on obligations to people, whatever the group might be, it identifies obligation to the scholarly discipline. This echoes one part of beneficence, as laid out in the Belmont report—the part that focuses on benefits to research.

These different responsibilities are echoed in the recent ethics code developed by the Linguistic Society of America (LSA). The LSA code notes, among other responsibilities, responsibility to both individuals and communities and responsibility to scholarship as key in ethics. It has a number of specific provisions that are applicable to fieldwork, and I cite relevant sections below (Linguistic Society of America ethics statement 2009: 2–3).