

## Draft of Amendments to ASA's (Association of Social Anthropologists of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth) Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice

### Preamble

Social anthropologists carry out their professional research in many places around the world; some where they are 'at home' and others where they are in some way 'foreign'. Anthropological scholarship occurs within a variety of economic, cultural, legal and political settings. As professionals and as citizens, they need to consider the effects of their involvement with, and consequences of their work for the following: the individuals and groups among whom they do their fieldwork (their research participants or 'subjects'); their colleagues and the discipline; and collaborating researchers; sponsors, funders, employers and gatekeepers; their own and host governments; and other interest groups and the wider society in the countries in which they work.

Anthropologists, like other social researchers, are faced increasingly with competing duties, obligations and conflicts of interest, with the need to make implicit or explicit choices between their own values and between the interests of different individuals and groups. Ethical and legal dilemmas occur at all stages of research: in the selection of topic, area or population, choice of sponsor and source of funding, in negotiating access, making 'research bargains' and during the research itself while conducting fieldwork, including the interpretation and analysis of results, the publication of findings and the disposal of data. Anthropologists have a responsibility to anticipate problems and insofar as is possible to resolve them without harming either the research participants or the scholarly community. They should do their utmost to ensure that they leave a research field in a state which permits future access by other researchers. As members of a discipline committed to the pursuit of knowledge and the public disclosure of findings, they should strive to maintain integrity in the conduct of anthropological research. This ethics code applies to anthropological work whether studying 'up' and/or 'down', with persons and/or animals as the case may be, within and outside the UK as well as in cyber space.

The ethnographic method – the process through which theory is developed on the basis of empirical data collected - is the dominant mode through which anthropology is practised. Ethnographic methods cover a range of research practices and methods often including long/short-term/multi-sited/repeated fieldwork/visits. These ethical guidelines address the stages of preparation, the process of fieldwork and the writing procedure. Within fieldwork, participant observation has been considered by anthropologists as one of the core methods. This is a holistic method of research which is usually carried out over a period of time and can be conducted with a wide variety of communities and groups. The questions for research can include economic, political, legal, medical settings and concerns as well as religious, gender, and kinship dimensions, among many others. The range of participants is also, as a result, varied. Participant observation is inductive and has the potential for uncovering unexpected links between different domains of social life. Accordingly, a degree of flexibility in research design that allows modification of topic focus - following the initial formulation of a research question - is required. Participant observation includes engagement with and observation of various forms of participatory activities specific to the group being studied, usually in both public and private settings. Fieldwork is also carried out by means of casual conversations (with a wide range of participants, some of whom are well-known and seen regularly, others during fleeting encounters), interviews (usually open-ended, qualitative and in-depth), surveys, audio and video recording, sometimes supplemented by subsequent co-viewing with participants. The methods can vary from the informal and unstructured (such as participant observation, conversations) through to structured methods, (such as interviews, surveys, audio-visual recordings).

Participant observation involves certain key ethical principles:

1. Participants should be made aware of the presence and purpose of the researcher whenever reasonably practicable. Researchers should inform participants of their research in the most appropriate way depending on the context of the research.

2. Fieldnotes (and other forms of personal data) are predominantly private barring legal exceptions. This is the most important way in which confidentiality and the anonymity of subjects is ensured. Anthropologists have a duty to protect all original records of their research from unauthorised access. They also have a duty to ensure that nothing that they publish or otherwise make public, through textual or audio-visual media, would permit identification of individuals that would put their welfare or security at risk.

#### Advance consent:

1. Given the methods used during fieldwork, and depending on the nature of the project, the researcher may be able to provide only rough approximations in advance (for example, to various institutional Ethics Committees including those to do with the university, National Health Service etc.) of some of the likely participants an anthropologist will observe or converse with during fieldwork and some of the likely scenarios in which consent will be sought. As a result, it may be difficult and/or artificial to prepare distinct data collection instruments for approval in advance. Given the open-ended and often long-term nature of fieldwork, ethical decision-making has to be undertaken repeatedly throughout the research and in response to specific circumstances.
2. Many of those participating in public events observed by the anthropologist will not be known to him or her. This is particularly the case for strangers visiting the community (a term that could also include employees of government agencies, multinational corporations, schools, hospitals among others) studied; or in studies on mobile groups (which could involve pastoral and nomadic groups, refugees or expatriate and corporate elites) who move around for various reasons (such as subsistence, ritual celebrations, pilgrimage, corporate meetings, wartime displacements) to other places; or in studies of large institutions. In such situations, the anthropologists should take all practicable steps to be introduced by local participants and identify him/herself as a researcher. Not everyone observed or photographed, especially in large crowds, will be known. Large-scale events (such as religious festivals, political rallies or mass protests) are clearly legitimate and necessary foci of anthropological study, but should be subject to various ethical considerations. Hence due sensitivity to large-scale events and necessary observation of ethical standards with regard to the sensibilities and security of the participants needs to be kept in mind depending on the nature of the event.
3. Many of the communities studied by anthropologists are highly suspicious of formal bureaucratic procedures and often of their state or local forms of the state. Under these circumstances, requests for signatures on printed forms are liable to arouse suspicion and therefore standard procedures for obtaining written consent can be problematic. It is possible and appropriate, however, to obtain informed verbal consent. In working with informants with limited literacy or with learning difficulties that might render informed consent as commonly understood problematic, it may be appropriate to give people the chance to discuss their consent to an interview with friends, family or other trusted acquaintances. Repeated checking with informants during the research process, can ensure that the continuity of consent is guaranteed.
4. In some cases, consent will initially need to be sought from individual gatekeepers such as community leaders and officials: chiefs, local councillors, headmen, hospital consultants, trade union leaders, etc or from collective decision-making bodies such as community or neighbourhood assemblies. In addition to needing to negotiate access to the field through such "gatekeepers", it will often be desirable to supplement the informed consent of collective bodies with that of individuals, particularly where substantial sectors of the local society, are excluded from collective decision-making but are also subjects of the research. By the same token, in all settings further consent may need to be negotiated as the research advances and new fields of inquiry open up.
5. Photography (both stills and film) is a very important tool of anthropological inquiry. Filming should always be overt. Moreover, in the case of large public events it is likely that not everyone

photographed/filmed will have the chance to give verbal consent. In such cases the researchers should do all that is possible in his/her powers to not compromise people's identities or security in public presentations of the material.

In light of these considerations, the weight of responsibility for adherence to good ethical conduct is on the anthropological researcher. Ethics Committees need to recognise the diversity of methods of ethnographic research. For anthropology, once the research is completed the ethics of representation is a major issue. The principles outlined below are intended to guide anthropologists not only in the way they conduct fieldwork but in the way they represent and publish their results to wider audiences.

To these ends the Association has adopted the following set of ethical guidelines to which individual ASA members other anthropologists should subscribe. They follow the educational model for professional codes, aiming to alert researchers to issues that raise ethical concerns or to potential problems and conflicts of interests that might arise in the research process. They are intended to provide a practical framework for anthropologists to make informed decisions about their own behaviour and involvement, and to help them communicate their professional positions more clearly to the other parties involved in or affected by their research activities. Anthropologists requiring permission from local bureaucracies for the purpose of their research (particularly on sensitive topics like research on children) might, however, need to adhere to the ethics procedure of the institution from which permission is being sought. The ASA does not adjudicate claims regarding unethical behaviour. Rather than intervening, the ASA can act as a forum for discussion among parties to a disagreement over ethics. Anthropological researchers should expect to encounter ethical dilemmas at every stage of their work, and should make good-faith efforts to identify potential ethical claims and conflicts in advance when preparing proposals and as projects proceed. Persons using the ASA guidelines to help them make ethical choices or for teaching are encouraged to seek out illustrative examples and appropriate case studies to enrich their knowledge base.

## 1. Relations With and Responsibilities Towards Research Participants

The close and often lengthy association of anthropologists with the people among whom they carry out research entails personal and moral relationships, trust and reciprocity between the researcher and research participants; it also entails recognition of power differentials between them.

**(1) Protecting research participants and honouring trust:** Anthropologists should endeavour to protect the physical, social and psychological well-being of people with whom they study and to respect their rights, interests, sensitivities and privacy, other than in the most exceptional of circumstances. It would also be important to keep in mind the ethical responsibilities to non-human research subjects.

(a) Most anthropologists would maintain that their paramount obligation is to their research participants and that when there is conflict, the interests and rights of those studied should come first. This means that anthropologists must reflect particularly deeply on the likely impacts on the people whom they are studying of any research, consultancy or other services that they might offer or be asked to provide to national/supra-national or foreign states or to non-state entities (such as transnational corporations, law enforcement agencies, NGOs or charities) that intervene or are seeking to intervene in the lives of those people. Work for state or non-state organisations that are covert, and therefore breaches relations of trust and openness, are especially problematic under most circumstances. Overt work that is only possible because the participants are subject to coercion by local forces or an occupying power is also likely to breach basic ethical standards, as well as unlikely to produce results of scholarly or scientific value.

(b) Under some research conditions, particularly those involving contracted research, it may not be possible to fully guarantee research participants' interests. In such cases anthropologists would be well-advised to consider in advance whether they should pursue such research.

**(2) Anticipating harms:** Anthropologists should be sensitive to the possible consequences of their work and should endeavour to guard against predictably harmful effects. Consent from subjects does not absolve anthropologists from their obligation to protect research participants as far as possible against any potential harmful effects of research:

(a) The researcher should try to minimise disturbances both to subjects themselves and to the subjects' relationships with their environment. Even though research participants may be immediately protected by the device of anonymity, the researcher should try to anticipate the long-term effects on individuals or groups as a result of the research;

(b) Anthropologists may sometimes be better placed than (at the least, some of) their informants to anticipate the possible repercussions of their research both for the immediate participants and for other members of the research population or the wider society. In certain political contexts, some groups, for example, religious or ethnic minorities, may be particularly vulnerable and it may be necessary to withhold data from publication or even to refrain from studying them at all.

**(3) Avoiding undue intrusion:** Anthropologists should be aware of the intrusive potential of some of their enquiries and methods:

(a) Like other social researchers, they have no special entitlement to study all phenomena; and the advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of information are not in themselves sufficient justifications for overriding the values and ignoring the interests of those studied;

(b) They should be aware that for research participants becoming the subject of anthropological description and interpretations can be a welcome experience, but it can also be a disturbing one. In many of the social scientific enquiries that have caused controversy, problems have not arisen because participants have suffered directly or indirectly any actual harm. Rather, concerns have resulted from participants' feelings of having suffered an intrusion into private and personal domains, or of having been wronged (for example, by acquiring self-knowledge which they did not seek or want). Where feasible, participants should also be made aware that they can withdraw from the research at any time.

**(4) Negotiating informed consent:** Inquiries involving human subjects should be based on the freely given informed consent of subjects. The principle of informed consent expresses the belief in the need for truthful and respectful exchanges between social researchers and the people whom they study.

(a) Negotiating consent entails communicating information likely to be material to a person's willingness to participate, such as: the purpose(s) of the study and the anticipated consequences of the research; the identity of funders and sponsors; the anticipated uses of the data; possible benefits of the study and harm or discomfort that might affect participants; issues relating to data storage and security; and including limits to the degree of anonymity and confidentiality which may be afforded to informants and subjects. These can be communicated verbally, particularly to those participants with whom the anthropologist has close and continuing relations.

(b) Conditions which constitute an absence of consent: consent made after the research is completed and publicly made available is not meaningful consent at all. Where subjects are legally compelled (e.g., by their employer or government) to participate in a piece of research, consent cannot be said to have been meaningfully given by subjects, and anthropologists are advised not to pursue that piece of work. However, as has been noted above, in the case of exceptional circumstances such as large public events - especially where photographs are taken - consent sometimes could be sought after the event as it is often not

possible to seek advance consent. Although, it will not always be possible to obtain formal consent, reasonably practicable steps to do so should be taken.

(c) Consent in ethnographic research is a process, not a one-off event, due to its long-term and open-ended qualities. Consent may require renegotiation over time; it is an issue to which the anthropologist should return periodically. Depending on the research project, researchers may only be able to provide a rough approximation of some of the likely scenarios in which consent might be sought. Thus continuous reflection on ethical issues and conduct is necessary.

(d) When audio-visual media is to be used, be it merely for data-gathering or for broader representational purposes such as producing ethnographic films or photographic essays, the principal research subjects should be made aware of the technical capacities of these media and should be free to reject their use. These conditions should generally apply in public spaces as well as in private spaces where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy. And anthropologists must take steps at the beginning of fieldwork to sensitise themselves to local norms that may embody different ideas about the private and public from those of the anthropologist's own society.

(e) Anthropologists engaged in cyber ethnography or other forms of research that involve the use of electronic texts, images and/or audio-recordings already in the public domain and/or available through fora such as blogs, chatrooms, social media sites etc., should remain sensitive to the possible implications of re-using those electronic texts, images and sounds, not only in terms of ethical responsibilities to the subjects but also in relation to the Intellectual Property Rights held either by the subjects themselves or by those who created the images or recordings in the first place. It is important to note that the very notion of public domain (given the issue of membership for some sites and corporate ownership in social networking sites) is an evolving, shifting phenomenon and hence so is cyber ethnography and its ethical implications.

(f) When information is being collected from proxies, care should be taken not to infringe the 'private space' of the subject or the relationship between subject and proxy; and if there are indications that the person concerned would object to certain information being disclosed, such information should not be sought by proxy.

(g) The long period over which anthropologists make use of their data and the possibility that unforeseen uses or theoretical interests may arise in the future may need to be conveyed to participants, as should any likelihood that the data may be shared (in some form) with other colleagues or be made available to sponsors, funders or other interested parties, or deposited in archives.

**(5) Rights to confidentiality and anonymity:** informants and other research participants should have the right to remain anonymous and to have their rights to privacy and confidentiality respected. However, privacy and confidentiality present anthropologists with particularly difficult problems given the cultural and legal variations between societies and the various ways in which the real interests or research role of the ethnographer may not fully be realised by some or all of participants or may even become invisible over time.

(a) Care should be taken not to infringe uninvited upon the 'private space' (as locally defined) of an individual or group;

(b) As far as is possible researchers should anticipate potential threats to confidentiality and anonymity. They should consider whether it is necessary even as a matter of propriety to record certain information at all; take appropriate measures relating to the storage and security of records during and after fieldwork; and use where appropriate such means as the removal of identifiers, the use of pseudonyms and other technical solutions to the problems of privacy in field records and in oral and written forms of data dissemination (whether or not this is enjoined by law or administrative regulation);

(c) Researchers should endeavour to anticipate problems likely to compromise anonymity; but they should make clear to participants that it may not be possible in field notes and other records or publications totally to conceal identities, and that the anonymity afforded or promised to individuals, families or other groups may also be unintentionally compromised. A particular configuration of attributes can frequently identify an individual beyond reasonable doubt; and it is particularly difficult to disguise, say, office-holders, organizations, public agencies, ethnic groups, religious denominations or other collectivities without so distorting the data as to compromise scholarly accuracy and integrity;

(d) If guarantees of privacy and confidentiality are made, they should be honoured unless there are clear and overriding ethical reasons not to do so. Confidential information should be treated as such by the anthropologist even when it enjoys no legal protection or privilege, and other people who have access to the data should likewise be made aware of their obligations; but conversely participants should be made aware that it is rarely, if at all, legally possible to ensure total confidentiality or to completely protect the privacy of records. Fieldnotes and other data should not be archived in raw form if this infringes either the promise of confidentiality and anonymity made to participants, or the stated reasons for the research on which informed consent was agreed. Extended embargo periods may provide a way of securing the material for future researchers, including those from source communities, while honouring present commitments. In the longer term, it might be proper to make available fieldnotes and other research material for use by other researchers e.g. by including them in relevant archives. Anthropologists should make this clear when securing informed consent.

(e) Anthropologists should similarly respect the measures taken by other researchers to maintain the anonymity of their research field and participants.

**(6) Fair return for assistance:** There should be no economic exploitation of individual informants, translators, groups, animals and research participants or cultural or biological materials; fair return should be made for their help and services.

**(7) Participants' intellectual property rights:** It should be recognised that research participants have contractual and/or legal interests and rights in data, recordings and publications, although rights will vary according to agreements and legal jurisdiction.

(a) It is the obligation of the interviewer to inform the interviewee of their rights under any copyright or data protection laws of the country where research takes place, and the interviewer should indicate beforehand any uses to which the anthropological use of interview methods is likely to be put (e.g., research, educational use, publication, broadcasting etc).

(b) Under the UK Copyright Act (1988), researchers making audio or video recordings should obtain 'copyright clearance' from interviewees if recordings are to be publicly broadcast or deposited in public archives. Any restrictions on use (e.g. time period) or other conditions (e.g. preservation of anonymity) which the interviewee requires should be recorded in writing or can also be done audio-visually as a record of oral consent. This is best done at the time of the interview (the anthropological use of this method), using a standard form. Retrospective clearance is often time-consuming or impossible where the interviewee is deceased or has moved away.

(c) Interviewers should clarify before interviewing the extent to which subjects are allowed to see transcripts of interviews, and field notes and to alter the content, withdraw statements, provide additional information or to add glosses on interpretations.

(d) Clarification should also be given to subjects regarding the degree to which they will be consulted prior to publication.

**(8) Participants' involvement in research:** As far as is possible anthropologists should try and involve the people being studied in the planning and execution of research projects. They should recognise that

their obligations to the participants or the host community may not end (indeed should not end, many would argue) with the completion of their fieldwork or research project.

## **II. Relations With and Responsibilities Towards Sponsors, Funders and Employers**

Anthropologists should attempt to ensure that sponsors, funders and employers appreciate the obligations that they have not only to them, but also to research participants and to professional colleagues.

**(1) Clarifying roles, rights and obligations:** Anthropologists should clarify in advance the respective roles, rights and obligations of sponsor, funder, employer and researcher:

- (a) They should be careful not to promise or imply acceptance of conditions which would be contrary to professional ethics or competing commitments. Where conflicts seem likely, they should refer sponsors or other interested parties to the relevant portions of the professional guidelines;
- (b) Anthropologists who work in non-academic settings should be particularly aware of likely constraints on research and publication and of the potentiality for conflict between the aims of the employer, funder or sponsor and the interests of the people studied;
- (c) Where some or all of the research participants are also acting as sponsors and/or funders of the research the potential for conflict between their different roles and interests should be made clear to them.

**(2) Obligations to sponsors, funders and employers:** Anthropologists should recognise their general and specific obligations to sponsors, funders and employers whether these are contractually defined or are only the subject of informal, and often unwritten, agreements. In particular:

- (a) They should be honest about their qualifications and expertise, about the limitations, advantages and disadvantages of their methods and data, and they should acknowledge the necessity for discretion with confidential information provided by sponsors and employers;
- (b) They should not conceal personal or other factors which might affect the satisfactory conduct or completion of the proposed research project or contract.

**(3) Negotiating 'research space':** Anthropologists should be careful to clarify, preferably in advance of signing contracts or starting their research, matters relating to their professional domain and to their control over the research project and its products:

- (a) They are entitled to full disclosure of the sources of funds, personnel and aims of the institution for the purpose(s) of the research project and the disposition of research results;
- (b) They are entitled to expect from a sponsor, funder or employer a respect for their professional expertise and for the integrity of the data, whether or not these obligations are incorporated in formal contracts. Even when contractual obligations may necessitate the guarding of privileged information, the methods and procedures that have been utilised to produce the published data should not be kept confidential;
- (c) They should pay particular attention to matters such as: their ability to protect the rights and interests of research participants; their ability to make all ethical decisions in their research; and their own and other parties' rights in data collected, in publications, copyright and royalties.

**(4) Relations with gatekeepers:** Where access to subjects is controlled by a national or local 'gatekeeper', researchers should not devolve their responsibilities onto the gatekeeper. Whilst respecting gatekeepers' legitimate interests, researchers should adhere to the principle of obtaining informed consent directly from subjects once access has been gained. They should be wary of inadvertently disturbing the relationship between subjects and gatekeepers since that will continue long after the researcher has left the field.

### III. Relations With, and Responsibilities Towards, Colleagues and the Discipline

Anthropologists derive their status and certain privileges of access to research participants and to data not only by virtue of their personal standing but also by virtue of their professional citizenship. In acknowledging membership of a wider anthropological community anthropologists owe various obligations to that community and can expect consideration from it.

**(1) Individual responsibility:** Anthropologists bear responsibility for the good reputation of the discipline and its practitioners. In considering the methods, procedures, content and reporting of their enquiries, their behaviour in the field and relations with research participants and field assistant, they should therefore try to ensure that their activities will not jeopardize future research. Thus, anthropological researchers are subject to the general moral rules of scientific and scholarly conduct: they should not deceive or knowingly misrepresent (e.g. fabricate evidence, falsify, or plagiarize), or attempt to prevent reporting of misconduct, or obstruct the scientific/scholarly research of others.

**(2) Conflicts of interest and consideration for colleagues:** It should be recognised that there may be conflicts of interest (professional and political) between anthropologists, particularly between visiting and local researchers, and especially when cross-national research is involved:

(a) Consideration for and consultation with anthropologists who have already worked or are currently working in the proposed research setting is advisable and is also a professional courtesy. In particular, the vulnerability of long-term research projects to academic intrusion should be recognised;

(b) In cross-national research, consideration should be given to the interests of local scholars and researchers, to the problems that may result from matters such as the disparities in resources available to visiting researchers, and to problems of equity in collaboration. As far as is possible and practicable, visiting anthropologists should try and involve local anthropologists and scholars in their research activities but should be alert to the potential for harm that such collaboration might entail in some contexts.

**(3) Sharing research materials:** Anthropologists should give consideration to ways in which research data and findings can be shared with colleagues and with research participants. However in certain instances this can prove to be difficult where political leaders, invading armies, military, multi-national corporations and the state are being criticised on various matters of injustice.

(a) Research findings, publications and, where feasible, data should be made available in the country where the research took place. If necessary, it should be translated into the national or local language. Researchers should be alert, though, to the harm to research participants, collaborators and local colleagues that might arise from total or even partial disclosure of raw or processed data or from revelations of their involvement in the research project. Anthropologists should weigh the intended and potential uses of their work and the impact of its distribution in determining whether limited availability of results is warranted and ethical in any given instance.

(b) Where the sharing with colleagues of raw, or even processed data or their (voluntary or obligatory) deposition in data archives or libraries is envisaged, care should be taken not to breach privacy and guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity, and appropriate safeguards should be devised.



**(4) Collaborative and team research:** In some cases anthropologists will need to collaborate with researchers in other disciplines, as well as with research and field assistants, clerical staff, students etc. In such cases they should make clear their own ethical and professional obligations and similarly take account of the ethical principles of their collaborators. Care should be taken to clarify roles, rights and obligations of team members in relation to matters such as the division of labour, responsibilities, access to and rights in data and fieldnotes, publication, co-authorship, professional liability, etc.

**(5) Responsibilities towards research students and field assistants:** Academic supervisors and project directors should ensure that students and assistants are aware of the ethical guidelines and should discuss with them potential (as well as actual) problems which may arise during the stages/periods of fieldwork or writing-up. Teachers/mentors should publicly acknowledge student/trainee assistance in research and preparation of their work; give appropriate credit for co-authorship to students/trainees; encourage publication of worthy student/trainee papers; and compensate students/trainees justly for their participation in all professional activities. It should also be a duty to acknowledge the support and intellectual input of colleagues in the field.

#### IV. Relations With Own and Host Governments

Anthropologists should be honest and candid in their relations with their own and host governments.

**(1) Conditions of access:** Researchers should seek assurance that they will not be required to compromise their professional and scholarly responsibilities as a condition of being granted research access.

**(2) Cross-national research:** Research conducted outside one's own country raises special ethical and political issues relating to personal and national disparities in wealth, power, the legal status of the researcher, political interest and his or her national political systems:

(a) Anthropologists should bear in mind the differences between the civil and legal, and often the financial position of national and foreign researchers and scholars;

(b) They should be aware that irresponsible actions by a researcher or research team may jeopardise access to a research setting or even to a whole country for other researchers, both anthropologist and non-anthropologist. Being cognisant of the consequence of one's research activities is particularly relevant when anthropologists consulting for governments, multi-national corporations, invading armies and the military do not prioritise the rights and interests of the local population and in cases where the ostensible aims of the intervention might reasonably be questioned by critical and reflective social scientists.

**(3) Open research:** Anthropologists owe a responsibility to their colleagues around the world and to the discipline as a whole not to use their anthropological role as a cover for clandestine research or activities.

**(4) Legal and administrative constraints:** Anthropologists should note that there may be a number of national laws or administrative regulations which may affect the conduct of their research, matters pertaining to data dissemination and storage, publication and rights of research subjects, sponsors and employers, etc They should also remember that, save in a very few exceptional circumstances, social research data are not privileged under law and may be subject to legal subpoena. Such laws vary by jurisdiction. Some which may have consequences for research and publication in the U.K. are, for example, the Data Protection Act, law of confidence, Race Relations Act, defamation laws, copyright law, law of contract, and the Official Secrets Act.

#### V. Responsibilities to the Wider Society

Anthropologists also have responsibilities towards other members of the public and wider society. They depend upon the confidence of the public and they should in their work attempt to promote and preserve such confidence without exaggerating the accuracy or explanatory power of their findings.

**(1) Widening the scope of social research:** Anthropologists should use the possibilities open to them to extend the scope of social inquiry and to communicate their findings for the benefit of the widest possible community. Anthropologists are most likely to avoid restrictions being placed on their work when they are able to stipulate in advance the issues over which they should maintain control; the greatest problems seem to emerge when such issues remain unresolved until the data are collected or the findings emerge.

**(2) Considering conflicting interests:** Social inquiry is predicated on the belief that greater access to well-founded information will serve rather than threaten the interests of society/ies:

(a) Nonetheless, in planning all phases of an inquiry, from design to presentation of findings, anthropologists should also consider the likely consequences for the wider society, groups within it, and possible future research, as well as for members of the research population not directly involved in the study as well as the immediate research participants;

(b) That information can be misconstrued or misused is not in itself a convincing argument against its collection and dissemination. All information is subject to misuse and no information is devoid of possible harm to one interest or another. Individuals may be harmed by their participation in social inquiries, or group interests may be harmed by certain findings. Researchers are usually not in a position to prevent action based on their findings; but they should, attempt to pre-empt likely misinterpretations and to counteract them when they occur.

**(3) Maintaining professional and scholarly integrity:** Research can never be entirely objective - the selection of topics may reflect a bias in favour of certain cultural or personal values, the employment base of the researcher, the source of funding and any of these other factors may impose certain priorities, obligations and prohibitions. But anthropologists should strive for impartiality and fair representation and be open about known barriers to its achievement:

(a) Anthropologists should not engage or collude in selecting methods designed to produce misleading results or in misrepresenting findings, either by commission or omission;

(b) When it is likely that research findings will bear upon public policy and opinion anthropologists should be careful to state any significant limitations on their findings and interpretations.

## VI Epilogue

The reputation of anthropological research will inevitably depend less on what professional bodies assert about their ethical norms than on the conduct of individual researchers. We recognise that ethical views and conclusions may legitimately differ, even when there is agreement about the facts of the case. The researcher thereby needs to reflect on their own position in the research and their practice of it, at all stages of the research. These guidelines are aimed at helping anthropologists to reach an equitable and satisfactory resolution of their (potential) dilemmas. This statement of ideals does not impose a rigid set of rules backed by institutional sanctions, given the variations in both individuals' moral precepts and the conditions under which they work. Guidelines cannot resolve difficulties in a vacuum nor allocate greater priority to one of the principles than another. Instead, they are aimed at educating anthropologists, sensitizing them to the potential sources of ethical conflict and dilemmas that may arise in research, scholarship and professional practice, and at being informative and descriptive rather than authoritarian or prescriptive. They aim to ensure that where a departure from the principles is contemplated or where the privileging of one group or interested party or parties is deemed situationally or legally necessary, the researcher's decisions should be based on foresight and informed deliberation.

Just as the current document has been immeasurably enriched by comments and contributions from ASA members, we very much hope that ASA membership will continue to call attention to issues and resources relating to the ethical guidelines of anthropology for the purpose of debate and deliberation.

## **VII. Acknowledgments**

The amendments to the ASA Ethics Guidelines were drafted by the ASA Executive Committee Members during the period July 2010 – November 2011. The Committee members were James Fairhead, Raminder Kaur, Nayanika Mookherjee, James Staples, Catherine Degnen and Garry Marvin. The ASA Ethics Guidelines were last updated in 1999 and on receiving considerable feedback from the ASA members the need was felt to update and amend the Guidelines in the light of the changing disciplinary nature of anthropology. The first version of this draft amended Guidelines were sent to all ASA Members in February 2011. A large number of ASA members responded with comments and thanks to all for contributing to this process. At the ASA AGM held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2011 it was decided that the recent amendments would be incorporated into the Ethics Guidelines and this second version of the draft guidelines will be finalised in due course in June 2011. Thereafter that version of the document was sent out to all ASA members for a final consultation process and all subsequent responses were received by end of July 2011 for them to be incorporated into the document. This version of the ASA Ethics Guidelines was proposed at an extraordinary AGM at the ASA 2011 conference in Lampeter, Wales. On XXXX, the Executive committee approved this version of the Ethics Guidelines. The Committee considered all comments from the membership in formulating the final draft in September 2011. The Committee also gratefully acknowledges the use of some language from the codes of ethics of the American Anthropological Association. We hope to publish this version of the Ethics Guidelines in the XXX edition of *Anthropology Today* [tbc] and on the ASA web site (<http://www.theasa.org>). Members are urged to bring to the attention of the ASA ethics officer (email [ethics@asa.org](mailto:ethics@asa.org)) any amendments that they would like to make to the ethics guidelines and suggested amendments can be added annually to the Guidelines as Addenda, on approval at the ASA AGM