

Committee on Ethics Briefing Papers on Common Dilemmas Faced by Anthropologists Conducting Research in Field Situations

The AAA Committee on Ethics has drafted the following Briefing Papers and is inviting and encouraging you to comment. Each Briefing paper contains an online form where you can provide your comments to the committee.

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**Briefing Paper on Determining What Constitutes a
Health Emergency and How to Respond in the Course
of Anthropological Research with Human Subjects**

**AAA Committee on Ethics
Prepared by Lauren Clark and Linda Whiteford**

Preface: In November 2000 the Committee on Ethics was asked to draft guidelines to address the question, How can anthropological researchers respond appropriately to health emergencies they encounter in the course of their research? Members on the Committee on Ethics have prepared this preliminary draft of proposed guidelines for health emergencies.

Official Sources of Guidelines: The Committee on Ethics recognizes that scientific investigations are regulated through a process of internal review for the protection of human subjects. In particular, the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services operates the Office for Human Research Protection, charged with monitoring compliance of research supported by HHS to standards outlined for the protection of human subjects <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/>. Universities and affiliated institutions also establish and monitor the protection of human subjects in research through a program of internal review. Finally, investigators are held to codes of ethical conduct adopted by professional and scientific organizations, including the American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethics.htm>. The Committee on Ethics recommends that anthropologists and anthropology students conducting research with human subjects become familiar with all applicable guidelines and codes of ethical conduct and adhere to them in protecting human subjects from research risks and maximizing their benefits through research participation.

Background Information on Ethical Conflicts and Advocacy: The decision to treat or not treat a human illness or condition may be fraught with ethical conflicts resulting from the nature of the illness or condition, the relationship of the researcher and subject, and the responsibilities and qualifications of the researcher. The AAA Code of Ethics states the following about ethical conflicts: " Anthropological researchers must expect to encounter ethical dilemmas at every stage of their work, and must make good-faith efforts to identify potential ethical claims and conflicts in advance when preparing proposals and as projects proceed. A section raising and responding to potential ethical issues should be part of every research proposal." Furthermore, taking action in response to a human subject's or research population's illnesses or health risks involves a research stance of advocacy. As stated in the AAA Code of Ethics, "Anthropologists may choose to move beyond disseminating research results to a position of advocacy. This is an individual decision, but not an ethical responsibility." Although it may be an individual decision to intervene in the course of a health emergency, it is the purpose of these guidelines to support researchers in making decisions about health emergencies and suggest sources of decision-making support as they select from among an array of responses to health emergencies.

Types of Health Emergencies: There are four types of health emergencies addressed in these guidelines. The types of emergencies are:

- Researcher Emergencies encountered by the researcher or research team in the course of fieldwork.
- Research Subject Emergencies affecting human subjects who participate in fieldwork and result from their participation.
- Individual Health Emergencies Observed by the Researcher, but the emergency is unrelated to participation in the research.
- Community or Population Health Emergencies Observed by the Researcher, but the emergency is unrelated to participation in the research.

What Kinds of Preparations Can Researchers Make for Potential Health Emergencies in the Course of Fieldwork? Health emergencies can threaten both researchers and research subjects. Given that every situation arising in the course of fieldwork cannot be anticipated, we recommend that researchers consider in advance the local health status profile of residents and epidemiologic patterns of communicable illness, accident, and injury before entering the field and anticipate emergencies they may encounter personally and among residents in the research area.

Researcher Emergencies: With foresight, common emergencies faced by researchers in a particular area can be anticipated. In locations where communicable diseases are endemic, the researcher would be wise to obtain recommended immunizations prior to entering the field. Researchers should thoughtfully consider the benefits of purchasing medical evacuation insurance for members of their research team should their field setting warrant such emergency measures.

Research Subject Emergencies: Research subjects face health emergencies, as well, some as a direct result of participation in a research study and others during the course of their daily life. Certain types of research may involve the collection of tissue samples or other invasive procedures that could be implicated in the development of a resultant medical emergency for an individual study subject. It is the researcher's responsibility to determine the risks of study participation in advance of fieldwork, and make plans for the appropriate training of research staff in safe and effective administration of all study procedures. Contingency plans should be established for complications or side effects resulting from all study procedures. As with all research protocols, plans for the minimization of research-related risks to human subjects should be reviewed and approved by the appropriate committees and internal review boards.

Individual Health Emergencies: Health emergencies for individuals unrelated to research participation may arise during the course of daily life, and the anthropologist should consider in advance the role of the researcher in response to observed health emergencies. When reviewed in advance, profiles of health and illness alert the researcher to conditions in field settings. For health emergencies of individuals, researchers should design and obtain approval for protocols to guide the administration of pharmaceutical agents to individuals should individual health emergencies be observed.

Community or Population Health Emergencies: For health emergencies of communities or populations, researchers may arrange in advance for consultation on an as-needed basis with a health expert should a disease escalate to epidemic proportions during the course of fieldwork. Researcher interventions for health emergencies experienced by a population in the course of daily life should be undertaken with the guidance of intervention protocols and after consultation with experts.

Who Determines Whether a Situation is a Health Emergency or Not? Some anthropologists also have credentials (such as the Medical Doctor degree or Nurse Practitioner certification) that prepare them to diagnose and treat human health conditions. In these cases, the researcher may use his or her professional judgement and appropriate consultation with colleagues and specialists to determine whether or not a situation constitutes a health emergency and how to respond to the situation within his or her scope of practice.

Recommendations for Consultation about Health Emergencies: We recommend all researchers arrange in advance for consultation for potential health emergencies in field settings. Furthermore, we recommended researchers contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to discuss health situations that may be classified as population-level health emergencies. We recommend to the American Anthropological Association that an official relationship be established between AAA and CDC such that an official contact person be designated to respond to inquiries about health emergencies from researchers conducting anthropological fieldwork within the United States or abroad.

Comment form

You may submit your comments anonymously by not giving us your name and email. However, we would appreciate knowing who you are so that we may contact you for clarification or questions regarding your comments.

Thank you,
Stacy Lathrop,
AN Editor

Briefing Paper on Remuneration to Subject Populations and Individuals

**AAA Committee on Ethics
Prepared by Gail E. Wagner**

Preface: In November 2000, the Committee on Ethics (COE) was asked to draft guidelines and other materials that address the level and kind of remuneration to subject populations and individuals that is both appropriate and fair. Members of the COE have taken this charge to relate to wages for labor (e.g., driving a vehicle), remuneration for interviews or demonstrations, and remuneration for cultural knowledge (frequently called Intellectual Property Rights [IPR], Traditional Knowledge [TK], or by preference of the international documents, heritage).

Official Sources of Guidelines: The Committee on Ethics recognizes that while appropriate and fair wages and remuneration must be culturally situated, ethical codes and guidelines of professional and scientific organizations touch on this subject. These include but are not limited to the AAA Code of Ethics <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethics.htm> and the International Society of Ethnobiology Code of Ethics and Guidelines <http://guallart.dac.uga.edu/ISE/SocEth.html> and <http://guallart.dac.uga.edu/guidelines>. Additionally, a number of international organizations, declarations, studies, and covenants specifically deal with wages, remuneration, ownership, and who should decide what is appropriate and fair. These include the International Labour Office of the United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1993, Annex in 1995), United Nations Study on the Protection of the Cultural and Intellectual Property of Indigenous Peoples (1993), and International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations (1994). The COE recommends that anthropologists and anthropology students who conduct research resulting in the need to remunerate subject populations or individuals should become familiar with all applicable guidelines and codes of ethics, as well as all applicable international organizations, declarations, and covenants.

Background Information on Remuneration: The AAA Code of Ethics provides general guidance regarding the issue of remuneration. Section III (Research) says that researchers should be alert to proper demands of good citizenship or host-guest relations. In III.A.1 it advises the researcher to consult actively with the affected individuals or group(s), with the goal of establishing a working relationship that can be beneficial to all parties involved. It further addresses compensation under III.A.6, when it recognizes anthropologists' debt to the societies in which they work and their obligation to reciprocate with people studied in appropriate ways.

In some cases, appropriate and fair ways to reciprocate or compensate the people studied are relatively clear. However, in societies where knowledge or ownership is communal, widespread, or not a commodity, or knowledge or labor are not appropriately compensated by money, anthropologists must seek individual solutions. Like the informed consent process (III.A.4), adequate and fair compensation may be a dynamic and continuous process. A number of international declarations and covenants that deal with indigenous rights may be helpful in formulating what sort of remuneration and to whom is both appropriate and fair. These will be outlined in the following section.

International Organizations and Documents Dealing with Remuneration: The International Labour Office of the United Nations specializes in social and labor questions and promotes the rights of working people, including indigenous workers. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) (<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>) in Article 23 states that (2) "Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work," and (3) "Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration" Article 18 states that indigenous peoples "enjoy fully all rights established under international labour law and national labour legislation". Furthermore, they should not be subjected to any discriminatory conditions of labour, employment or salary. Article 27 states that (2) "Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author".

The Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1993) addresses rights of indigenous people relating to indigenous lands and natural resources (Part VI); protection of cultural and intellectual property (Part III); and preservation of cultural and ethnic procedures for handling issues such as remuneration (Part VII). Basically, it places the identification of what is fair and appropriate remuneration in the hands of the population that is studied.

The International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations (1994) addresses the cultural rights of nations (Article II, Part III), the right to land, territories and place (Part VI), to intellectual property (Part VI, Para. 27), and "to determine the responsibilities of individuals to its communities" (Part VII, Para. 32).

In a 1995 United Nations Annex on Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of the Heritage of Indigenous People, indigenous people are (3) "recognized as primary guardians and interpreters of their culture". Words such as "heritage", "IPR", and "researchers" are defined. Principle 5 places ownership and custody of heritage under the "rules and practices of each people". Principle 8 recognizes indigenous "control over all research conducted within their territories, or which uses their people as subjects of study". Principle 10 states that agreements "for the recording, study, use or display of indigenous peoples" must ensure that the people concerned "continue to be the primary beneficiaries of commercial applications".

Summary: The question of what is appropriate and fair remuneration to subject populations and individuals may arise in relation to wages for labor, remuneration for interviews or demonstrations, or remuneration for heritage (intellectual property or traditional knowledge). The first step is to identify who it is appropriate to remunerate. The anthropologist must keep in mind that knowledge or ownership may be communal, that not all aspects of culture should be treated like commerce, and that money may not be an appropriate form of remuneration. The international documents are clear that all people should receive equal pay for equal work. Likewise, they are clear about placing the ownership of heritage and the appropriate ways to handle issues such as remuneration in the hands of the people being studied. Appropriate and fair remuneration is culturally situated, and can be seen as a process that should be individually negotiated by each anthropologist under the guidance of those people with whom the anthropologist works.

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You may submit your comments anonymously by not giving us your name and email. However, we would appreciate knowing who you are so that we may contact you for clarification or questions regarding your comments.

Thank you,
Stacy Lathrop,
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Briefing Paper on The Impact of Material Assistance to Study Population

**AAA Committee on Ethics
Prepared by Hy V. Luong**

Preface: In February 2001, the AAA Executive Committee asked the AAA Committee on Ethics to develop a plan for developing draft guidelines and other materials concerning ethical behavior in field situations. Among the issues to be addressed is the impact of material assistance to study populations. In its October 26-28, 2001 meetings, the Committee on Ethics reached the conclusion that it did not see a need for additional guidelines that addressed the first five issues given to the COE by the AAA Executive Committee for consideration in February 2001, including the issue of "the impact of material assistance to study population". The reason is the 1998 AAA Code of Ethics already provides guidance on those five ethical issues. In its October 26-28 meetings, the COE decided instead to submit briefing papers on those ethical issues.

Official Sources of Guidelines: The Committee on Ethics recognizes the need for anthropological researchers to provide some material assistance to individuals and groups in study populations, as well as to avoid the negative impacts of their material assistance on study populations. The AAA Code of Ethics, while not discussing specifically the impact of anthropological researchers' material assistance on study populations, has provided general guidelines regarding the responsibility of anthropological researchers to the people with whom they work and whose lives and cultures they study. The COE recommends that anthropological researchers become familiar with the AAA Code of Ethics and adhere to it during and after their research.

Background information on the Impact of Material Assistance to Study Population: The AAA Code of Ethics states: "Anthropological researchers have primary ethical obligations to the people, species, and materials they study and to the people with whom they work. These ethical obligations include:

- To avoid harm or wrong
- To respect the well-being of humans and nonhuman primates
- To work for the long-term conservation of the archaeological, fossil, and historical records
- To consult actively with the affected individuals or group(s), with the goal of establishing a working relationship that can be beneficial to all parties involved.

How should anthropological researchers provide material assistance to the study population?

Anthropological researchers frequently provide material assistance to study populations as a reciprocity to collective or individual local assistance, or as integral parts of the newly formed/evolving relations with individuals or groups in study populations. The direct material assistance provided by anthropological researchers is normally limited in scope, as it is constrained by researchers' resources.

In conformity with the AAA Code of Ethics, despite its normally limited scope, material assistance to the study population should:

- Avoid exacerbating conflicts within the study population or conflicts of the study population with other populations.
- Avoid increasing the health risks of the study population or other populations.
- Avoid markedly disrupting social relations within the study population.
- Avoid damaging local archaeological, fossil, and historical records.
- Avoid negative impacts on the environment of the study population.

Anthropological researchers may not be able to foresee all the consequences of their material assistance to study populations. But in order to minimize harm and to contribute to the well-being of the study population and the conservation of its environment and heritages, the material assistance should be based on researchers' best professional knowledge of the study population in its historical, social, physical environments, as well as on careful consultation with other experts and with as many potentially affected individuals as possible.

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Briefing Paper on Consideration of the Potentially Negative Impact of the Publication of Factual Data about a Study Population on Such Population

**AAA Committee on Ethics
Prepared by Joe Watkins**

Preface: In November 2000 the Committee on Ethics was asked to draft guidelines to address the potentially negative impact of factual data about a study population on such population. Members of the Committee on Ethics have taken this charge to relate to the actual publication of factual data rather than the mere consideration or collection of such data by the anthropological researcher.

Official Sources of Guidelines: The Committee on Ethics recognizes the need for the anthropological researcher to be aware of the need to temper anthropological research with the rights and concerns of human populations. As such, the Committee recommends that anthropological researchers read and become increasingly familiar with various codes of

ethics as they relate to the study of human populations, particularly the Ethical Guidelines for Practitioners of the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (on-line version at <http://www.aaanet.org/napa/code.htm>); the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (on-line version at <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.htm>), and the AAA Code of Ethics (on-line version at <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>).

Background Information on the Impact of Anthropological Fieldwork and the Collection and Publication of Data: The AAA Code of Ethics provides the practitioner general guidance regarding this issue. In the Introduction (Section II), it states that "... the generation of anthropological knowledge is a dynamic process using many different and evolving approaches; and that for moral and practical reasons, the generation and utilization of knowledge should be achieved in an ethical manner". In Research (Section III), it notes that anthropological researchers should be open about the "... potential impacts ... (of) research projects with funders, colleagues, persons studied or providing information, and with relevant parties affected by the research." Under III(A)(1), the Code notes that researchers have primary ethical responsibilities to those studied and that those obligations "... can supersede the goal of seeking new knowledge, and can lead to decisions not to undertake or to discontinue a research project when the primary obligation conflicts with other responsibilities...". While the following subsection warns the researcher "To avoid harm or wrong, understanding that the development of knowledge can lead to change which may be positive or negative for the people or animals worked with or studied", it perhaps does not go far enough in warning the researcher to consider the possibility of harm that the presentation of factual data may have on a population. For example, because of the social stigma attached to cannibalism by Western society, a researcher might wish to consider the ways that such a statement concerning the practices of a marginal culture might be used to further marginalize that culture. Section III(B) of the Code of Ethics speaks to the anthropologist's responsibility to scholarship and science, noting that anthropologists "should utilize the results of their work in an appropriate fashion, and whenever possible disseminate their findings to the scientific and scholarly community."

Finally, under III(C)(1), anthropologists are reminded "... they are not only responsible for the factual content of their statements but also must consider carefully the social and political implications of the information they disseminate. They must do everything in their power to insure that such information is well understood, properly contextualized, and responsibly utilized. ... At the same time, they must be alert to the possible harm their information may cause people with whom they work or colleagues."

How should the anthropologist consider the potentially negative impact of the publication of factual data about a study population on such population? The anthropological enterprise is one that involves the collection of data relating to the study of human cultures. As such, it is imperative that the anthropological researcher understand that the presentation of information, even if scientifically factual, might have an impact on the population under study. Therefore, the possibility exists that the researcher may be placed in an ethical dilemma concerning the question of publishing or not publishing such data. Of additional importance, however, is the realization that any self-censorship by the researcher might be harmful both to the discipline and to the population under study and might amount to a

misrepresentation by omission. Often the anthropologist is the only researcher qualified to understand the complexity of the social structures of the population under study and to present the information in such a way to facilitate its comprehension by the society at large. It is perhaps more important that the anthropologist be aware that the sensationalized presentation of factual data usually has more of an impact on the population under study than the mere presentation of the data.

Therefore, anthropological researchers should consider the potentially negative impact of the publication of factual data about a study population on such population prior to beginning a project by attempting to:

- Identify at the on-set of any project the possible personal, social, and political implications that the publication of factual data concerning a study population may have on that population;
- Involve the study population throughout the entire process of the project (from the formulation of the research design, the collection of the data, the synthesis of data, and the publication of data) in such a way that the cultural context of the population under study is represented within the project to as much an extent possible;
- Weigh the scientific and anthropological importance of the data against the possible harm to the study population;
- Integrate the data in such a way that its role within the cultural context is fully explained;
- Present the data in such a way that sensationalism is minimized while the contextual comprehension of the data is maximized;
- Report truthfully any scientific or cultural biases that may be inherent in the presentation of the data;
- Explain the importance of the data under discussion both to the scientific and local communities in language understandable by each community and disseminate the information in both communities as widely as possible;
- While advocacy is a personal choice that each researcher must make, it is imperative that the researcher acknowledge the scientific need for balance in anthropological reporting.

Comment form

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Briefing Paper on Informed Consent

AAA Committee on Ethics
Prepared by Lauren Clark and Ann Kingsolver

Preface: In November 2000 the Committee on Ethics was asked to address the question, "What constitutes valid and informed consent in anthropological research?" Members on the Committee on Ethics have prepared this briefing paper in response.

Official Sources of Guidelines: The Committee on Ethics recognizes that scientific investigations are regulated through a process of internal review for the protection of human subjects (or, collaborators). In particular, the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services operates the Office for Human Research Protection, charged with monitoring compliance of research supported by HHS to standards outlined for the protection of human subjects (<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/>). Universities and affiliated institutions also establish and monitor protection of human subjects in research through a program of internal review. Finally, investigators are held to codes of ethical conduct adopted by professional and scientific organizations. One of these is the American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics (<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethics.htm>). International documents which should be consulted include the 1995 Annex to the UN Declaration on Discrimination Against Indigenous Peoples, Principle 9 (<http://www.cwis.org/fwdp/International/heritage.txt>) and the 1994 International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations (<http://www.cwis.org/icrin-94.html>). The Committee on Ethics recommends that anthropologists and anthropology students conducting research with human subjects become familiar with all applicable guidelines and codes of ethical conduct and adhere to them in obtaining informed consent for these collaborators' participation in research.

Background Information on Informed Consent: The AAA Code of Ethics states the following about informed consent: "Anthropological researchers should obtain in advance the informed consent of persons being studied, providing information, owning or controlling access to material being studied, or otherwise identified as having interests which might be impacted by the research. It is understood that the degree and breadth of informed consent required will depend on the nature of the project and may be affected by requirements of other codes, laws, and ethics of the country or community in which the research is pursued. Further, it is understood that the informed consent process is dynamic and continuous; the process should be initiated in the project design and continue through implementation by way of dialogue and negotiation with those studied. Researchers are responsible for identifying and complying with the various informed consent codes, laws and regulations affecting their projects. Informed consent, for the purposes of this code, does not necessarily imply or require a particular written or signed form. It is the quality of the consent, not the format, that is relevant."

What Constitutes Valid and Informed Consent in Anthropological Research? The following characteristics are indicative of valid and informed consent. Researchers seeking valid and informed consent will

- Engage in an ongoing and dynamic discussion with collaborators (or human subjects, in the language of some codes) about the nature of study participation, its risks and potential benefits; this means actively soliciting advice from research participants at all stages, including planning and documentation.
- Engage in a dialogue with human subjects who have previously or continuously been involved in a particular study about the nature of ongoing participation or resuming participation in a study. This dialogue should include the nature of their participation, risks and potential benefits at this particular time.
- Discuss with potential research subjects the ways study participation may affect them when research data are disseminated. For example, if photographs documenting their participation in a particular event or situation at a certain time could prove incriminating if viewed by a wide audience, this eventuality should be discussed.
- Demonstrate, in the appropriate language, all research equipment and documentation techniques prior to obtaining consent so that research collaborators, or participants, may be said to be adequately informed about the research process.
- Inform potential subjects of the anonymity, confidentiality, and security measures taken for all types of study data, including digitized, visual, and material data.
- Seek to answer all questions and concerns about study participation that potential subjects may have about their involvement in the research process.
- Provide a long-term mechanism for study subjects to contact the researcher or the researcher's institution to express concerns at a later date and/or to withdraw their data from the research process.
- Provide, if possible, alternative contact information in case a potential research subject or collaborator does not want to participate but does not feel able to communicate that directly to the researcher.
- Obtain official consent from the human subject to participate in the study prior to the collection of any data to be included in the research process. The form and format of official consent can vary, depending on the appropriateness of written, audiotaped, or videotaped consent to the research situation. Those granting the permission should be involved actively in determining the appropriate form of documenting consent.
- Write and submit forms pertaining to informed consent, and obtain approval by the appropriate committees and/or review boards prior to recruiting subjects, obtaining informed consent, or collecting data.

Comment form

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Thank you,
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**Briefing Paper for Consideration of the
Ethical Implications of Sexual Relationships between
Anthropologists and Members of a Study Population**

**AAA Committee on Ethics
Prepared by Joe Watkins**

Preface: In November 2000 the Committee on Ethics was asked to draft guidelines and a plan of action concerning the ethical implications regarding sexual relationships between anthropologists and members of communities or organizations with whom research is being conducted. The end result of the implementation of this plan would be a recommendation as to whether the AAA should develop specific guidelines for its members concerning sexual relations with minors, relations between consenting adults, and the rights of those who are exposed to unwanted sexual advances, or whether existing legal and organizational guidelines are sufficient. This briefing paper is NOT addressing the issue of sexual harassment, since that issue is addressed in legal guidelines.

Official Sources of Guidelines: The Committee on Ethics recognizes the need for the anthropological researcher to be aware of the ethical implications regarding sexual relationships between the anthropologist and members of the communities or organizations with whom research is being conducted. As such, the Committee recommends that anthropological researchers read and become increasingly familiar with various codes of ethics as they relate to the study of human populations, particularly the Ethical Guidelines for Practitioners of the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (<http://www.aaanet.org/napa/code.htm>); the National Association of Social Workers (<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.htm>), and the AAA Code of Ethics (<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>). Additionally, there are various organizations which offer information and guidance on specific subsets of this question. For example, the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights (<http://www.unhchr.ch/map.htm>) offers guidance in the form of Fact Sheets, Covenants and Conventions on the rights of the Child ("Fact Sheet No. 10, revision 1, the Rights of the Child") and the rights of women and the girl-child ("Fact Sheet No. 22, Discrimination against Women: the Convention and the Committee").

Background Information on the Ethical Implications of Sexual Relationships between Anthropologists and Members of a Study Population: The AAA Code of Ethics pays scant attention to this issue. In the Preamble (Section I), it states merely that "... fieldworkers may develop close relationships with persons ... with whom they work, generating an additional level of ethical considerations." Additionally, the Code notes that researchers have primary ethical responsibilities to those studied and "To avoid harm or wrong ..." The topic is addressed in a more general sense under Section III, Research, Part A(6), where the Code of Ethics notes that anthropologists "... must not exploit individuals ...". Section IV. Teaching speaks to the responsibility of the anthropologists as teacher/mentor to students and trainees, and, in (1), encourages them to "... conduct their programs in ways that preclude discrimination on the basis of sex ...sexual orientation ... or other criteria irrelevant to academic performance." More specifically, however, the anthropologist as teacher/mentor in (5) is reminded to "... beware of the exploitation and serious conflicts of

interest which may result if they engage in sexual relations with students/trainees for whose education and professional training they are in any way responsible." The Code of Ethics, however, is quiet concerning sexual relationships between the anthropological researcher and the population under study. As such, the Committee on Ethics is initiating discussion regarding sexual relationships between the researcher and members of the population under study.

How should the anthropologist consider the ethical implications of sexual relationships with members of a study population? The anthropological fieldworker must be aware of the actual or perceived difference in economic and social "power" between the researcher and the population studied. In many field situations, the anthropologist is an exotic "other" whose presence may be disruptive to the local cultural group and who is often perceived to be from a world of wealth and power. As such, it is imperative that the anthropological researcher understand the implications of becoming involved in a sexual relationship with members of the population under study. Humans are sexual animals, and the possibility exists that the researcher may be placed in an ethical dilemma should a sexual relationship develop in a field situation. It is equally important that the anthropologist be aware of the health implications of such a relationship to the researcher as well as the population under study.

Therefore, anthropological researchers should be aware of and consider the ethical implications of sexual relationships with a study population prior to undertaking a relationship, especially in relation to the fact that:

- All cultures define sexual relationships in differing manners. What is not perceived as a sexual relationship in the researcher's culture might be perceived as one in the population under study.
- The cultural milieu in which each culture operates (that of the researcher and the culture under study) can impact the perceptions of sexuality and the sexual relationship.
- The relationship between the anthropologist and the population under study is one that hinges on trust. As such, sexual relations may act to undermine that trust by placing the anthropologist in conflict with portions of the population or institutions within the local population.
- Sexual relationships with individuals under the local, national, or international age of consent should NEVER be undertaken. In situations where such age of consent is variable, the anthropologist should exercise common sense and control in determining which age of consent should be followed and should likely follow the most stringent code possible.
- Any sexual relationship between the anthropologist and members of the study population should at all times be consensual and be of free choice, with no explicit or implicit threat of retribution for failure to comply.
- Cultural displays of sexuality (i.e., flirting) vary by population and should be placed within their proper context. Such actions should not be misconstrued by the field researcher to indicate either sexual interest or social acceptance.
- Since the institutional meaning of sexual relationships is integrated into cultures in different ways, the role of sexual relationships as a part of a specific culture should

be identified and understood prior to the initiation or consummation of a sexual relationship with members of the culture.

- The anthropological researcher should be aware of the cultural implications of the sexual relationship beyond the physical act itself. For example, a researcher might view a sexual relationship as merely physical, while the other party might consider it paramount to marriage. Sexual relationships between consenting adults still carries with it an implied contract whose articles have different meanings within each culture.
- The researcher should be aware that what is perceived as a sexual relationship by one culture might be perceived as prostitution in another.
- Gender relations vary within each culture, as do the rights of each gender. It is imperative that the researcher understand the cultural limitations placed on each gender prior to the initiation or consummation of a sexual relationship and be aware of the impacts of such on the exercise of free choice.
- The researcher should not facilitate or ignore the sexual misconduct of others either through direct participation or non-action.
- The researcher must recognize that the population under study might try to enlist the real or perceived "power" of the researcher through the encouragement of a sexual relationship. Such actions should be discouraged.
- The anthropological researcher should be aware of the possible impact of a sexual relationship on social and cultural institutions upon the termination of the field research.
- The researcher should be aware of the perception of "sexual favors" by the culture under study and should act however possible to minimize that perception.
- The researcher should be aware of the impact of the implications of the reporting on the sexuality of a culture in professional and public media on the members of that culture and the perceptions of the general public.
- The researcher should resist the urge to "go native" to the greatest extent possible so as to prevent the risk of improper relationships.
- Researchers should be aware of the economic implications of sexual relationships in that they might lead to the unequal distribution or access to material goods or be perceived as such.
- Researchers should be aware that a sexual relationship between the researcher and a member of the population under study might be misconstrued by members of the population under study to indicate a conscious choice of one portion of a population over another.
- Marriages that might result from a sexual relationship should be recorded in the cultures of each participant and should be acknowledged by whatever means necessary in both cultures.
- The researcher should be aware that some aspects of a sexual relationship may be culturally inappropriate in one situation while not in another, but the researcher should endeavor to avoid getting placed in situations without adequate preparation.
- The researcher should avoid joking about sexual matters to the extent that those jokes may be misconstrued.
- While a sexual relationship carried out between the researcher and a member of the population being studied may be totally acceptable, consensual, and between adults,

it is important that the researcher recognize that such a relationship might impact the objectivity of the anthropological study.

- Sexual harassment in any form is NOT an acceptable part of any anthropological program, study, research, or other endeavor, and may vary by culture. As such, the anthropological researcher should operate under the most stringent code possible in order to minimize the threat of real or perceived sexual harassment.

Comment form

You may submit your comments anonymously by not giving us your name and email. However, we would appreciate knowing who you are so that we may contact you for clarification or questions regarding your comments.

Thank you,
Stacy Lathrop,
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