

ETHICS AND ANTHROPOLOGY

In 1971 the AAA adopted a code of ethics entitled "AAA: Principles of Professional Responsibility." This code reveals strong differences between contemporary anthropologists and those who hold the schizoid view. The preamble suggests that anthropologists should avoid research that can potentially damage either the people studied or the scholarly community. The code covers six areas of professional responsibility.

1. Responsibility to Those Studied. Anthropologists' main responsibility is to the people they study. Anthropologists should do all they can to protect their informants' welfare and to honor their dignity and privacy. If interests conflict, these people come first. Their rights and interests must be protected. Specifically, anthropologists should let informants know the aims and anticipated consequences of their research. They should ensure that informants preserve their anonymity in data collection. Informants should not be exploited for personal gain. Anthropologists must anticipate and take steps to avoid potentially damaging effects of the publication of their results. Reflecting the AAA's disapproval of secret research, reports should be available to the general public.

2. Responsibility to the Public. As scholars who devote their lives to understanding human

diversity, anthropologists should speak out publicly about what they know and believe as a result of their professional expertise. They should contribute to an adequate definition of social reality, upon which public opinion and policy can be based. Anthropologists should also be aware of the limitations of their expertise.

3. Responsibility to the Discipline. Anthropologists are responsible for the reputations of their discipline and their colleagues. They should maintain their integrity in the field so that their behavior will not jeopardize future research by others.

4. Responsibility to Students. Anthropologists should be fair, candid, nonexploitative, and committed to the welfare and academic progress of their students. They should make students aware of ethical problems in research.

5. Responsibility to Sponsors. Anthropologists should be honest about their qualifications, capabilities, and aims. They should not agree to working conditions or terms of employment that violate professional ethics. They should retain the right to make their own decisions on ethical issues during research.

6. Responsibility to One's Own and to Host Governments. Anthropologists should demand assurance that agreements with governments do not require them to compromise their professional responsibilities and ethics in order to pursue their research.

This statement of principles of professional responsibility was designed to offer guidelines. However, the code also provides for censure of unprofessional conduct. When the actions of one anthropologist jeopardize others or appear unethical, colleagues may examine those actions and take measures that lie within the mandate of the AAA. A committee on ethics is now a permanent part of the AAA.