

American Sociological Association  
**Code of Ethics**  
**Proposed Revision**  
Approved by Council in August 2017 for consideration by  
the full ASA membership in the 2018 election

**PREAMBLE**

**GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

- Principle A: Professional Competence
- Principle B: Integrity
- Principle C: Professional and Scientific Responsibility
- Principle D: Respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity
- Principle E: Social Responsibility
- Principle F: Human Rights

**ETHICAL STANDARDS**

1. Competence
2. Representation and Misuse of Expertise
3. Delegation and Supervision
4. Discrimination
5. Exploitation
6. Harassment
7. Employment Decisions
  - 7.1 Fair Employment Practices*
  - 7.2 Responsibilities as Employees*
8. Conflicts of Interest and Commitment
  - 8.1 Disclosure*
  - 8.2 Decision-making*
9. Public Communications
10. Confidentiality
  - 10.1 Confidentiality in Research*
  - 10.2 Confidentiality in Teaching*
  - 10.3 Confidentiality in Service*
  - 10.4 Confidentiality in Sociological Practice*
  - 10.5 Limits of Confidentiality*
  - 10.6 Electronic Transmission of Confidential Information*
  - 10.7 Preservation of Confidential Information*
11. Informed Consent
  - 11.1 Scope of Informed Consent*
  - 11.2 Informed Consent with Students and Subordinates*
  - 11.3 Informed Consent with Vulnerable Populations and Children*
  - 11.4 Use of Deception in Research*
  - 11.5 Use of Recording Technology*
12. Research Planning, Implementation, and Dissemination
  - 12.1 Planning and Implementation*
  - 12.2 Unanticipated Research Opportunities*

- 12.3 Inducements for Research Participation*
- 12.4 Reporting on Research*
- 12.5 Sharing Data*
- 13. Plagiarism
- 14. Authorship
- 15. Publication Process
  - 15.1 Submission of Manuscripts for Publication*
  - 15.2 Responsibilities of Editors*
- 16. Responsibilities of Reviewers
- 17. Education, Teaching, and Training
  - 17.1 Administration of Educational Programs*
  - 17.2 Teaching and Training*
- 18. Contractual and Consulting Services
- 19. Adherence to the Code of Ethics
  - 19.1 Familiarity with the Code of Ethics*
  - 19.2 Confronting Ethical Issues*
  - 19.3 Fair Treatment of Parties in Ethical Disputes*
  - 19.4 Reporting Ethical Violations of Others*
  - 19.5 Cooperating with the Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE)*
  - 19.6 Improper Complaints*

## **PREAMBLE**

The Code of Ethics (the Code) of the American Sociological Association (ASA or the Association) sets forth the principles and ethical standards that underlie sociologists' scientific and professional responsibilities and conduct. These principles and standards should be used as guidelines when examining everyday scientific and professional activities. They constitute normative statements for sociologists and provide guidance on issues that sociologists may encounter in their work.

The ASA Code of Ethics consists of this Preamble, six General Principles, and a number of specific Ethical Standards. This Code is also accompanied by the Policies and Procedures of the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE), which describe the procedures for filing, investigating, and resolving complaints of unethical conduct.

The Preamble and General Principles of the Code are aspirational goals to guide sociologists toward the highest ideals of Sociology. Although the Preamble and General Principles are not enforceable rules, they should be considered by sociologists in arriving at an ethical course of action and may be considered by ethics bodies in interpreting the Ethical Standards.

The Ethical Standards set forth enforceable rules of scientific and professional conduct for sociologists. Most of the Ethical Standards are written broadly in order to apply to sociologists in varied roles, and the application of an Ethical Standard may vary depending on the context. The Ethical Standards are not exhaustive. Conduct that is not specifically addressed by this Code of Ethics is not necessarily ethical or unethical.

The foundation of a set of ethical standards for a sociologist's work-related conduct rests on a personal commitment to a lifelong effort to act ethically; to encourage ethical behavior by students, supervisors, supervisees, employers, employees, and colleagues; and to consult with others as needed concerning ethical problems. Drawing from personal values, culture, and experience, sociologists may supplement, but must not violate, the values and rules specified in the Code of Ethics.

Sociologists should strive to adhere to the principles in the Code of Ethics. Membership in the ASA commits members to the Ethical Standards and the Policies and Procedures of the Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE). Members are advised of this obligation upon joining and renewing their membership in the Association, and also that violations of the Ethical Standards in the Code may lead to the imposition of sanctions, up to and including termination of membership. ASA members may be reviewed under these Ethical Standards only if the activity is part of or affects their scientific and professional functions. Personal activities having no connection to sociologists' performance of their scientific and professional roles are not subject to the Code of Ethics.

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

The following General Principles are aspirational and serve as a guide for sociologists in determining the ethical course of action in a specific context. They exemplify the highest ideals of professional conduct. ASA has no enforcement obligation with respect to these general principles.

### **Principle A: Professional Competence**

Sociologists strive to maintain high levels of competence in their work; they recognize the limitations of their expertise; and they undertake only those tasks for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience. They recognize the need for ongoing education in order to remain professionally competent; and they utilize the appropriate scientific, professional, technical, and administrative resources needed to ensure competence in their professional activities. They consult with other professionals when necessary for the benefit of their colleagues, students, research participants, and clients.

### **Principle B: Integrity**

Sociologists are honest, fair, and respectful of others in their professional activities—in research, teaching, practice, and service. Sociologists do not knowingly act in ways that jeopardize either their own or others' professional welfare. Sociologists conduct their affairs in ways that inspire trust and confidence; they do not knowingly make statements that are false, misleading, or deceptive.

### **Principle C: Professional and Scientific Responsibility**

Sociologists adhere to the highest scientific and professional standards and accept responsibility for their work. Sociologists understand that they form a community and show respect for other sociologists even when they disagree on theoretical, methodological, or personal approaches to professional activities. This is the essence of collegiality. Sociologists also value the public trust in Sociology and are concerned about their ethical behavior and that of other sociologists that might compromise that trust. While endeavoring always to be collegial, sociologists must never let the desire to be collegial outweigh their shared responsibility for ethical behavior. When appropriate, they consult with colleagues to assess, prevent, and/or report unethical conduct.

### **Principle D: Respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity**

Sociologists respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people. They strive to eliminate bias in their professional activities, and they do not tolerate any forms of discrimination based on age, gender, race, socioeconomic status and socioeconomic origins, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, health conditions, political affiliation, marital status, domestic status, parental status, or any other applicable basis proscribed by law. They are sensitive to cultural, individual, and role differences in serving, teaching, and studying groups of people with distinctive characteristics. In all of their work-related activities, sociologists acknowledge the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from their own.

## **Principle E: Social Responsibility**

Sociologists are aware of their professional and scientific responsibility to the communities and societies in which they live and work. They apply and make public their knowledge in order to contribute to the public good. When undertaking research, they strive to advance the science of Sociology and to serve the public good. At the same time, sociologists strive to be aware of situations that may result in harm to individuals, groups or communities.

## **Principle F: Human Rights**

In the course of their research, teaching, practice, and service, sociologists are committed to professional behaviors consistent with promoting the human rights of all people, including other sociologists. In their professional lives, sociologists strive to use their knowledge and skills to advance the cause of human rights worldwide.

## **ETHICAL STANDARDS**

The following Ethical Standards set forth norms of professional and scientific conduct for sociologists which are enforceable by the ASA. The ASA has the sole authority to interpret these Ethical Standards and to determine their application to any particular situation.

### **1. Competence**

- (a) Sociologists conduct research, teach, practice, and provide service only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, or appropriate professional experience.
- (b) Sociologists conduct research, teach, practice, and provide service in new areas or involving new techniques only after they have taken reasonable steps to ensure the competence of their work in these areas.
- (c) Sociologists maintain awareness of current scientific and professional information in their fields of activity and undertake continuing efforts to maintain competence in the skills they use.
- (d) Sociologists refrain from undertaking an activity if their statuses, beliefs, or opinions may interfere with their scientific or professional work or lead to harm to a student, supervisee, human subject, client, colleague, or other person to whom they have a scientific, teaching, consulting, or other professional obligation.

### **2. Representation and Misuse of Expertise**

- (a) In research, teaching, practice, service, or other situations where sociologists render professional judgments or present their expertise, they accurately and fairly represent their areas and degrees of expertise.
- (b) Sociologists do not accept grants, contracts, consultation, or work assignments from individual or organizational clients or sponsors that appear likely to require violation of these Ethical Standards. Sociologists dissociate themselves from such activities if they discover a violation and are unable to achieve its correction.
- (c) If sociologists learn of misuse or misrepresentation of their work, they take reasonable steps to correct or minimize such misuse or misrepresentation.

### **3. Delegation and Supervision**

- (a) Sociologists provide proper training and supervision to their students, supervisees, or employees and take reasonable steps to see that such persons perform services responsibly, competently, and ethically.
- (b) Sociologists delegate to their students, supervisees, or employees only those responsibilities that such persons, based on their education, training, or experience, can reasonably be expected to perform either independently or with the level of supervision provided.

### **4. Discrimination**

Sociologists do not engage in discrimination in their work, including hiring, promotion, compensation, treatment, or any other conditions of employment or career development, based on age, gender, race, socioeconomic status and socioeconomic origins, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, health conditions, political affiliation, marital status, domestic status, parental status; or any other applicable basis proscribed by law.

### **5. Exploitation**

- (a) Whether for personal, economic, or professional advantage, sociologists do not exploit persons over whom they have direct or indirect supervisory, evaluative, or other authority such as students, supervisees, employees, or research participants.
- (b) Sociologists do not have a sexual relationship with anyone they directly supervise or exercise evaluative authority over, including students, supervisees, employees, or research participants.

### **6. Harassment**

Sociologists do not engage in harassment of any person, including colleagues, students, supervisees, employees, staff, or research participants. Harassment consists of a single intense and severe act or multiple persistent acts, any of which are demeaning, abusive, offensive, or create a hostile professional or workplace environment. Harassment may include unnecessary, exaggerated, or unwarranted scrutiny or attack, whether verbal or non-verbal. Sexual harassment may include unwanted sexual solicitation, physical advance, or verbal or non-verbal conduct that is sexual in nature. Acts of harassment can be based on age, race, socioeconomic status and socioeconomic origins, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, health conditions, political affiliation, marital status, domestic status, parental status, or any other applicable basis proscribed by law.

### **7. Employment Decisions**

Sociologists serving on recruitment committees, personnel committees, or as department or division chairs, deans, and others with employer responsibilities and authority, as well as individuals seeking or leaving employment, have an obligation to adhere to the following Ethical Standards.

#### *7.1 Fair Employment Practices*

- (a) When participating in employment-related decisions, sociologists make reasonable efforts to ensure equal opportunity and fair treatment to all full- and part-time employees.
- (b) When participating in employment-related decisions, sociologists communicate the procedures and requirements for hiring, promotion, tenure, and termination to full- and part-time employees and prospective employees.
- (c) When participating in employment-related decisions, sociologists have the responsibility to be informed of applicable fair employment laws.

- (d) When participating in employment-related decisions, sociologists inform full- and part-time employees and prospective employees of any constraints on research and publication, and negotiate clear understandings about any conditions that may limit research and scholarly activity.

### *7.2 Responsibilities as Employees*

- (a) When seeking employment, sociologists provide prospective employers with accurate and complete information on their professional qualifications and experiences.
- (b) Sociologists fully and faithfully fulfill the duties and responsibilities agreed upon as part of their employment.
- (c) When leaving a position, permanently or temporarily, sociologists use reasonable efforts to provide their employers with adequate notice and take reasonable steps to reduce any negative effects of their leaving.

## **8. Conflicts of Interest and Commitment**

Conflicts of interest arise when sociologists' personal or financial interests prevent them from performing their professional work in an unbiased manner. Because sociologists' scientific and professional judgments and actions may affect the lives of others, they are alert to and guard against conflicts of interest or apparent conflicts of interest based on personal, financial, social, organizational, or political factors that might lead them to misuse their knowledge, expertise, or influence. If sociologists discover a conflict of interest that impacts their judgment or actions, they must withdraw from the scientific or professional activity or take other reasonable steps to mitigate the effects of the conflict.

Sociologists also avoid conflicts of commitment. Conflicts of commitment arise when sociologists are unable to fulfill the duties and responsibilities agreed upon as part of their employment due to other commitments. In research, teaching, practice, and service, sociologists are alert to situations that might cause a conflict of interest or commitment and take appropriate action to prevent such conflicts or disclose them to appropriate parties.

### *8.1 Disclosure*

Sociologists disclose all relevant sources of financial support for their professional and scientific activity to employers, clients, sponsors, publishers, and the public. Sociologists also disclose other relevant personal or professional relationships that may have the appearance of or potential for a conflict of interest. Sociologists comply with all applicable institutional and governmental conflict of interest policies and disclosure rules. Once disclosed, such conflicts should be managed in ways that are appropriate to the situation. If such conflicts cannot be managed in a manner that avoids impact of the conflict on the activity being undertaken, the activity should not be undertaken.

### *8.2 Decision-making*

Both in the workplace and in professional activities outside the workplace, sociologists do not participate in deliberations and decisions on matters where they have conflicts of interest and commitment or the appearance of such conflicts. They avoid the impact of potentially biasing affiliations or relationships in research, teaching, practice, and service. Such potentially biasing affiliations or relationships may be either positive or negative and include, but are not limited to, those that are economic, political, friendship, religious, social, theoretical or methodological in nature.

## **9. Public Communications**

- (a) Sociologists take steps to ensure the accuracy of all public communications in their professional and scientific work. Such public communications include, but are not limited to: directory listings; personal resumes or curriculum vitae; social media communications; advertising; brochures or printed matter; interviews or comments to the media; statements in legal proceedings; lectures and public oral presentations; or other published materials.

- (b) Sociologists do not make public statements that are false, deceptive, or fraudulent, either because of what they state, convey, or suggest or because of what they omit, concerning their research, practice, or other work activities or those of persons or organizations. Such public statements may pertain to, but are not limited to: (1) training, experience, or competence; (2) academic degrees; (3) credentials; (4) institutional or association affiliations; (5) services; (6) fees; or (7) publications or research findings. Sociologists do not make false or deceptive statements concerning the scientific basis for, results of, or degree of success from their professional services.
- (c) When sociologists provide professional advice or comment by means of public communications, including lectures, demonstrations, radio or television programs, prerecorded tapes, printed articles, mailed material, digital media, including social media, they take reasonable precautions to ensure that the statements are based on appropriate research, literature, and practice; and the statements are otherwise consistent with this Code of Ethics.
- (d) Sociologists who engage or employ others to create or place public statements that promote their work products, professional services, or other activities retain responsibility for such statements.
- (e) Sociologists make reasonable efforts to prevent others whom they do not directly engage, employ, or supervise (such as employers, publishers, sponsors, organizational clients, members of the media) from making deceptive statements concerning the sociologist's own professional research, teaching, or practice.

## 10. Confidentiality

- (a) Information is confidential when an individual can reasonably expect that the information will not be made public in a personally identifiable manner. This is especially critical when the public release of the information could be harmful to the person to whom it refers.
- (b) Sociologists have an obligation to always ensure that confidential information is protected. They do so to ensure the integrity of research and the open communication with research participants, and to protect sensitive information obtained in research, teaching, practice, and service.
- (c) When gathering or receiving confidential information, sociologists should take into account the long-term uses of the information, including its potential placement in public archives or the availability of the information to other researchers or practitioners.

### 10.1 Confidentiality in Research

- (a) Sociologists take all reasonable precautions to protect the confidentiality rights of research participants.
- (b) Confidential information provided by research participants should be treated as such by sociologists even if there is no legal protection or privilege to do so.
- (c) Information provided under an understanding of confidentiality is treated as such even after the death of those providing that information.
- (d) The obligation to maintain confidentiality extends to members of research or training teams and collaborating organizations who have access to the confidential information. To ensure that access to confidential information is restricted and respected, it is the responsibility of researchers, collaborators, and administrators to instruct and supervise staff and research workers to ensure they take the steps necessary to protect confidentiality.
- (e) When using confidential information about individuals collected by other persons or institutions, sociologists protect the confidentiality of individually identifiable information.
- (f) The ethical requirements for confidentiality of personally identifiable information apply to the collection and analysis of large scale data sets which are generated through technology and internet activities. Sociologists do not attempt to re-identify such data.
- (g) Sociologists make reasonable efforts to maintain confidentiality in the storage and transmission of research information.

### *10.2 Confidentiality in Teaching*

In accord with current legal statutes and institutional policies, sociologists protect the confidentiality of student records, performance, evaluation, and personally identifiable information, whether verbal or written, that is given in the context of academic consultation, supervision, or advising.

### *10.3 Confidentiality in Service*

Sociologists protect the confidentiality of deliberations, activities, or roles, including, where applicable, that of professional committees, review panels, or advisory groups (e.g., the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics).

### *10.4 Confidentiality in Sociological Practice*

Sociologists protect the confidentiality of deliberations, activities, or roles, including, where applicable, that of clients, professional contracts, grants, review panels, or advisory groups.

### *10.5 Limits of Confidentiality*

- (a) Sociologists inform themselves fully about all laws and rules which may limit or alter assurances of confidentiality. They determine their ability to assure confidentiality and, as appropriate, inform research participants, students, colleagues, employees, clients, or others of any limitations to this assurance as soon as possible.
- (b) In rare cases, sociologists may not be required to adhere to these confidentiality obligations. Sociologists may confront unanticipated circumstances where they become aware of confidential information that is clearly health- or life-threatening to research participants, students, colleagues, employees, clients, or others. In these cases, before taking action, sociologists evaluate, with applicable law and regulation in mind, the importance of assurances of confidentiality as specified in this Code of Ethics.
- (c) Confidentiality is not required with respect to observations in public places, activities conducted in public, or in other settings where no rules of privacy are provided by law or custom. Similarly, assurance of confidentiality is not required in the case of information available from public records or unrestricted internet sites.
- (d) Sociologists who conduct research with participants who are engaging in illegal or potentially stigmatizing behaviors must understand the limits of confidentiality and address possible challenges to maintaining confidentiality. These limits should be reviewed by an authoritative body with expertise on the ethics of social science research such as an institutional review board.

### *10.6 Electronic Transmission of Confidential Information*

Sociologists engaged in research, teaching, practice, and service employ industry-standard secure methods in storing, delivering or transferring any confidential data, information, or communication over public computer networks. Sociologists take reasonable steps to avoid the problems of maintaining confidentiality and control over the transmission of sensitive material when its use may open their professional and scientific communication to unauthorized persons.

### *10.7 Preservation of Confidential Information*

- (a) Sociologists take reasonable steps to ensure the preservation of confidential records, data, or information consistent with these Ethical Standards. The preservation of such materials may also be governed by law, regulation, or institutional policies.
- (b) Sociologists plan so that confidentiality of records, data, or information is protected in the event of the sociologist's death, incapacity, or withdrawal from a position or practice.

## **11. Informed Consent**

Informed consent is a basic ethical tenet of all research involving human subjects, including sociological research. Sociologists do not involve a human being as a participant in research without the informed consent of the participant or the participant's legally authorized representative, except as otherwise specified in these Ethical

Standards. Sociologists recognize the possibility of undue influence or subtle pressures on participants that may derive from researchers' expertise or authority, and they take this into account when designing informed consent procedures.

- (a) As part of obtaining informed consent, sociologists inform prospective research participants or their legal representatives of the nature of the research. They indicate to them that their participation or continued participation is voluntary; they inform them of significant factors that may be expected to influence their willingness to participate (e.g., possible risks and benefits of their participation); and they respond to questions from them. Also, if relevant, sociologists explain that refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation in the research involves no penalty, and explain any foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing, when necessary.
- (b) Sociologists have the responsibility to ensure that the participants understand the research requirements and that participants actively participate in the consent process.
- (c) Sociologists recognize that consent is a process. When sociologists regularly interact with research participants over a period of time (e.g., research panels and ethnographic research), they periodically remind the participants about the nature of the consent, their right to discontinue at any time, and inform the participants if the research procedures change.
- (d) Sociologists are familiar with and conform to applicable state and federal law and regulations and, where applicable, institutional review board requirements for obtaining informed consent for research. Sociologists recognize that these Ethical Standards and institutional requirements may require more informed consent procedures than are required by state and federal law and regulations.
- (e) Sociologists honor all commitments they have made to research participants as part of the informed consent process except when significant unanticipated circumstances demand otherwise, as set forth in 10.5(a) and 10.5(b).
- (f) Sociologists explicitly discuss confidentiality and, if applicable, the extent to which confidentiality may be limited. If sociologists plan to share the data resulting from their research, they explain the processes for ensuring confidentiality by subsequent researchers.
- (g) Sociologists should consider carefully if confidentiality can be maintained with long term observational studies and provide participants information about such risks.
- (h) Sociologists keep paper or electronic records documenting consent unless such records are the only link to the personal identity of a participant. In such situations, sociologists record that consent has been obtained and the method used to do so.

### *11.1 Scope of Informed Consent*

- (a) Sociologists conducting research obtain consent from research participants or their legally authorized representatives (1) when data are collected from research participants through any form of communication, interaction, or intervention; or (2) when the behavior of research participants occurs in a private context where an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or reporting is taking place. Sociologists are aware that not all information on the internet is considered public, and must include informed consent procedures for research in restricted internet locations.
- (b) Sociologists may conduct research without obtaining consent for research carried out in public places where privacy is not expected. They may use publicly-available information about individuals, e.g., naturalistic observations in public places, analysis of public records, and archival research. If, under such circumstances, sociologists have any doubt about the need for informed consent, they consult with an authoritative body with expertise on the ethics of social science research, such as an institutional review board, before proceeding with the research.
- (c) Despite the importance of informed consent, sociologists may seek waivers from an authoritative body with expertise in the ethics of social science research, such as an institutional review board, when (1) the research involves no more than minimal risk for research participants, and (2) the research could not practicably be carried out if informed consent were required.
- (d) Sociologists do not typically need informed consent when using information from public internet sites. These might include much of the content on the internet, including blogs and social media sites. Whenever

internet sites are not public, sociologists will receive permission from either the participants or the site managers before beginning the research.

- (e) Sociologists may conduct research where participants are willing to be identified. Sociologists should consider the effect of voluntary disclosure on the research and other participants and, as much as possible, respect the wishes of the participants who state they want to be identified.

### *11.2 Informed Consent with Students and Subordinates*

When undertaking research at their own institutions or organizations with research participants who are students or who are subordinates of the researchers, sociologists take special care to protect the prospective participants from any negative consequences of declining or withdrawing from participation.

### *11.3 Informed Consent with Vulnerable Populations and Children*

- (a) When conducting research with vulnerable populations, sociologists take special care to ensure that all aspects of the research are understood by the participants themselves to the extent possible. Sociologists respect the dignity of these populations and do not assume that the participants cannot consent for themselves. They also determine who can provide consent if the participants are not able to do so in accordance with applicable legal requirements. Sociologists use language that is understandable to and respectful of the research participants. Sociologists also take special care to ensure that the voluntary nature of the research is understood by the participants or their legally authorized representatives.
- (b) When vulnerable populations are not able to consent, the consent of a legally acceptable representative (LAR) can be substituted. When LARs provide informed consent, sociologists also attempt to obtain assent from the participants to the extent possible and consistent with respect and dignity of the participants.
- (c) Sociologists should especially be aware of any mandatory reporting requirements when conducting research with children, older persons, and others protected by these requirements. Children who are wards of the state may require special consent procedures.
- (d) When the research involves no more than minimal risk for the children, sociologists may seek waivers of parental or guardian consent from an authoritative body with expertise on the ethics of social science research such as an institutional review board, if the research could not practicably be carried out were consent to be required, or the consent of a parent or guardian is not a reasonable requirement to protect the child.
- (e) Sociologists recognize that waivers of consent from a child and a parent or guardian require approval from an authoritative body with expertise on the ethics of social science research such as an institutional review board. However, waivers of parental informed consent do not imply that the assent of the child is waived; the wishes of the child regarding participation in the research must be respected.

### *11.4 Use of Deception in Research*

- (a) Deception can include misleading participants about the research procedures and/or not providing all relevant information about the research. Sociologists do not use deceptive techniques unless they have determined that the following conditions have been met (1) the research involves no more than minimal risk to research participants; (2) deception is justified by the study's prospective scientific, educational, or applied value; (3) equally effective alternative procedures that do not use deception are not feasible; and (4) they have obtained the approval of an authoritative body with expertise on the ethics of social science research such as an institutional review board.
- (b) Sociologists do not deceive research participants about significant aspects of the research that would affect their willingness to participate, such as physical risks, discomfort, or unpleasant emotional experiences.
- (c) When deception is an integral feature of the design and conduct of research, sociologists attempt to correct any misconception that research participants may have as soon as possible, and no later than at the conclusion of the research. This debriefing may be waived if correcting the deception can potentially cause problems for the participants or if debriefing is not possible.

- (d) Sociologists generally disclose their identities to research participants. On rare occasions, sociologists may need to conceal their identities in order to undertake research that could not practicably be carried out were they to be known as researchers. Under such circumstances, sociologists undertake the research if it involves no more than minimal additional risk for the research participants, and if they have obtained approval from an authoritative body with expertise on the ethics of social science research such as an institutional review board. Under such circumstances, confidentiality must be maintained.

### *11.5 Use of Recording Technology*

Sociologists obtain informed consent from research participants, colleagues, students, employees, clients, or others prior to photographing, videotaping, filming, or recording them in any form, unless these activities involve naturalistic observations in public places where confidentiality is not expected and it is not anticipated that the recording will be used in a manner that could cause personal identification or harm.

## **12. Research Planning, Implementation, and Dissemination**

Sociologists have an obligation to promote the integrity of research and to comply with the ethical tenets of science in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of their research. They do so in order to advance knowledge, to protect the public interest, to minimize the possibility that results will be misleading, and to protect the rights of research participants.

### *12.1 Planning and Implementation*

- (a) In planning and implementing research, sociologists consult those with expertise concerning any special population under investigation or likely to be affected.
- (b) In planning and implementing research, sociologists consider its ethical acceptability under these Ethical Standards. If the best ethical practice is unclear, sociologists consult with institutional review boards or another authoritative body with expertise on the ethics of social science research.
- (c) Sociologists are responsible for ethically carrying out all research conducted by them or by others under their supervision or authority.
- (d) In planning and implementing research, sociologists minimize the possibility that results will be misleading.
- (e) Sociologists take all reasonable steps to implement protections for the rights and welfare of research participants as well as other persons and groups that might be affected due to the research.
- (f) In their research, sociologists do not behave in ways that increase risk, or are threatening to the health or life of research participants or others.

### *12.2 Unanticipated Research Opportunities*

If, during the course of teaching, practice, service, or non-professional activities, sociologists determine that they wish to undertake research that was not previously anticipated, they take steps to ensure that the research can be undertaken consistent with ethical principles, especially those relating to confidentiality and informed consent. Under such circumstances, sociologists seek the approval of an authoritative body with expertise on the ethics of social science research such as an institutional review board.

### *12.3 Inducements for Research Participation*

Sociologists do not offer excessive or inappropriate financial or other inducements to obtain the participation of research participants, if the inducements are likely to constitute an undue influence on the decision to participate in the research. Sociologists may provide appropriate incentives as an acknowledgement of participants' time and inconvenience incurred by participation in the study.

### *12.4 Reporting on Research*

- (a) Sociologists do not fabricate data or falsify results.
- (b) In presenting their work, sociologists report their findings fully and do not omit relevant data. They report results whether they support or contradict the anticipated outcomes.

- (c) With respect to the findings and interpretation of their research, sociologists take particular care to state all relevant qualifications. Sociologists also disclose underlying assumptions, theories, methods, measures, and research designs that might bear upon the findings and interpretation of their work.
- (d) Consistent with the spirit of full disclosure of methods and analyses, once findings are publicly disseminated, sociologists permit their open assessment and verification by other responsible researchers, with appropriate safeguards to protect the confidentiality of research participants.
- (e) If sociologists discover significant errors in their publication or presentation of data, they take reasonable steps to correct such errors in a correction, a retraction, published errata, or other media as appropriate.
- (f) Sociologists report the sources of financial support in their written papers and note any special relations to any sponsor. In special circumstances, sociologists may withhold the names of specific sponsors if they provide an adequate and full description of the nature and interest of the sponsor.
- (g) Sociologists take special care to report accurately the results of others' scholarship by using correct information and citations when presenting the work of others in publications, teaching, practice, and service settings.

### *12.5 Sharing Data*

- (a) As a regular practice, sociologists share data and pertinent documentation as an integral part of a research plan. Sociologists generally make their data available after completion of a project or its major publications, except where proprietary agreements with employers, contractors, or clients preclude such accessibility or when it is impossible to share data and protect the confidentiality of the research participants (e.g., field notes or detailed information from ethnographic interviews).
- (b) Sociologists who place data in public archives do so in a form that is consistent with the interests of the research participants and protects the confidentiality of information.
- (c) Sociologists who do not otherwise place data in public archives keep data available and retain documentation relating to the research for a reasonable period of time after the publication or dissemination of results.
- (d) Sociologists may ask persons who request their data for further analysis to bear any associated incremental costs, if necessary, of preparing the data. If the initial design included data sharing plans, incremental costs may not be needed.
- (e) Sociologists take all reasonable steps to determine that appropriate consent has been obtained before they transfer personally identifiable data to others. Similarly, sociologists who receive data from others must determine that appropriate permissions were obtained.
- (f) Sociologists who use data from others for further analyses explicitly acknowledge the contribution of the initial researchers.

## **13. Plagiarism**

Sociologists do not present others' work as their own, whether it is published, unpublished, or electronically available.

- (a) In publications, presentations, teaching, practice, and service, sociologists explicitly identify, credit, and reference the author(s) when they take data or material verbatim from their own or another person's written work, whether it is published, unpublished, or electronically available.
- (b) In their publications, presentations, teaching, practice, and service, sociologists provide acknowledgment of and reference to the use of their own and others' work, even if the work is paraphrased and not quoted verbatim.
- (c) While sociologists utilize and build on the concepts, theories, and paradigms of others, they may not claim credit for creating such ideas and must cite the creator of such ideas where appropriate. Citation is not necessary in the case of established concepts such as social class, role, etc.
- (d) In collaborative research projects, especially those with students and junior colleagues, the work of all collaborators must be identified and acknowledged appropriately.

- (e) While sociologists may have occasion to use portions of their own earlier published works, they should clearly acknowledge those portions, avoiding the appearance that they are new. This includes works translated into another language.

## **14. Authorship**

Sociologists take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed or to which they have made a substantial contribution.

- (a) In collaborative work, both within Sociology and across disciplines, research teams vary with regard to decisions about the order of authorship. Although there are alternate approaches (which may be explained in a footnote or acknowledgement), the default order of authorship in Sociology is based on the relative scientific or professional contributions of the authors.
- (b) When collaborative work substantially derives from a student's dissertation or thesis, the student is usually listed as first author.

## **15. Publication Process**

Sociologists adhere to high ethical standards when participating in the publication and review processes as authors, editors, or reviewers.

### *15.1 Submission of Manuscripts for Publication*

- (a) In cases of multiple authorship, sociologists confer with all other authors prior to submitting work for publication and establish mutually acceptable agreements regarding submission and the division of royalties, if any.
- (b) In submitting a manuscript to a professional journal, book series, or edited book, sociologists grant that publication first claim to publishing the manuscript except where explicit policies allow multiple submissions. Sociologists do not submit a manuscript to a second publication until after an official decision has been received from the first publication or until the manuscript is withdrawn. Sociologists submitting a manuscript for publication in a journal, book series, or edited book can withdraw a manuscript from consideration up until an official acceptance is made.

### *15.2 Responsibilities of Editors*

- (a) When serving as editors of journals, book series, or other publications, sociologists are fair in the application of standards and operate without personal or ideological favoritism or malice. Editors strive to be cognizant of any potential conflicts of interest.
- (b) When serving as editors of journals, book series, or other publications, sociologists seek to ensure the confidential nature of the review process and supervise editorial office staff, including students, in accordance with practices that maintain confidentiality.
- (c) When serving as editors of journals, book series, or other publications, sociologists are obligated to publish all manuscripts accepted for publication unless major errors or ethical violations are discovered after acceptance of the manuscript (e.g., plagiarism or scientific misconduct).
- (d) When serving as editors of journals, book series, or other publications, sociologists make unbiased selections of reviewers who will be able to fairly evaluate a manuscript.
- (e) When serving as editors of journals, book series, or other publications, sociologists take reasonable steps to ensure the anonymity of reviewers unless they otherwise receive permission from reviewers to reveal their identity. Editors ensure that their staff conform to this practice.
- (f) When serving as journal editors, sociologists ensure the anonymity of authors unless and until a manuscript is accepted for publication or unless the established practices of the journal are otherwise.
- (g) When serving as journal editors, sociologists take reasonable steps to provide for the timely review of all manuscripts, prompt response to inquiries about the status of the reviews, and, once accepted, the timely publication of the manuscripts.

## 16. Responsibilities of Reviewers

- (a) Sociologists do not use or otherwise seek to gain from information or material received in a confidential context (e.g., obtained from reviewing a manuscript or serving on a proposal review panel), unless they have authorization to do so.
- (b) In reviewing material submitted for publication, grant support, or other evaluation purposes, sociologists adhere to the strict confidentiality of the process and respect the proprietary rights of the author(s).
- (c) Sociologists disclose conflicts of interest or decline requests to review the work of others where conflicts of interest are involved.
- (d) Sociologists may decline requests to review the work of others when they have questions about the integrity of the review process or about the integrity of the work to be reviewed.
- (e) If asked to review a manuscript, book, or proposal they have previously reviewed for another publication or funding source, sociologists make it known to the person making the request (e.g., editor, program officer) unless it is clear that they are being asked to provide a reappraisal.

## 17. Education, Teaching, and Training

As teachers, supervisors, and trainers, sociologists follow high ethical standards in order to ensure the quality of sociological education and the integrity of the teacher-student relationship.

### *17.01 Administration of Educational Programs*

- (a) Sociologists who are responsible for education and training programs seek to ensure that the programs are competently designed, provide the proper experiences, and meet all goals for which claims are made by the program.
- (b) Sociologists responsible for education and training programs seek to ensure that there is an accurate description of the program content, training goals and objectives, and requirements that must be met for satisfactory completion of the program.
- (c) Sociologists responsible for education and training programs take steps to ensure that graduate assistants and temporary instructors have the substantive knowledge required to teach courses and the teaching skills needed to facilitate student learning.
- (d) Sociologists responsible for education and training programs have an obligation to ensure that research and professional ethics are taught to their students as part of their preparation.

### *17.2 Teaching and Training*

- (a) Sociologists conscientiously perform their teaching responsibilities. They maintain a high level of subject matter knowledge, have appropriate pedagogical skills, and ensure that courses are current, accurate, representative, and appropriate within the program of studies.
- (b) Sociologists provide complete and accurate information about their courses at the outset, particularly regarding the subject matter to be covered, the bases for evaluation, and the nature of course experiences.
- (c) Sociologists make decisions concerning textbooks and other assigned readings, course content, course requirements, and grading solely on the basis of educational criteria, without regard for financial or other incentives.
- (d) In accord with current legal statutes and institutional policies, sociologists protect the confidentiality of student records, performance, evaluation, and personal information, whether verbal or written, that is given in the context of academic consultation, supervision, or advising.
- (e) Sociologists provide proper training and supervision to their teaching assistants and other teaching trainees, and take reasonable steps to ensure that such persons perform those teaching responsibilities competently and ethically.
- (f) Sociologists do not permit personal animosities or intellectual differences with colleagues to foreclose students' or supervisees' access to these colleagues or to interfere with student or supervisee learning, academic progress, or professional development.

- (g) Sociologists are alert about entering into dual-role relationships with students in their classes. Such relationships are likely to detract from student development and lead to actual or perceived favoritism on the part of the teacher.

## **18. Contractual and Consulting Services**

- (a) Sociologists undertake grants, contracts, or consultation only when they are knowledgeable about the substance, methods, and techniques they plan to use, or have a plan for incorporating appropriate expertise.
- (b) In undertaking grants, contracts, or consultation, sociologists base the results of their professional work on appropriate information and techniques.
- (c) In undertaking grants, contracts, or consultation, sociologists accurately document and appropriately retain their professional and scientific work.
- (d) In establishing a contractual arrangement for research, consultation, or other services, sociologists clarify, to the extent feasible, at the outset, the nature of the relationship with the individual, organizational, or institutional client. This clarification includes, as appropriate, the nature of the services to be performed, the probable uses of the services provided, possibilities for the sociologist's future use of the work for scholarly or publication purposes, the timetable for delivery of those services, and compensation and billing arrangements.

## **19. Adherence to the Code of Ethics**

Sociologists have an obligation to identify and attempt to resolve ethical issues according to this Code of Ethics. Sociologists are bound by the requirements of this Code of Ethics even when other laws and legal requirements are less stringent.

### *19.1 Familiarity with the Code of Ethics*

Sociologists have an obligation to be familiar with this Code of Ethics and its application to their professional and scientific work. Lack of awareness or misunderstanding of an Ethical Standard is not, in itself, a defense to a charge of unethical conduct.

### *19.2 Confronting Ethical Issues*

- (a) When sociologists are uncertain whether a particular situation or course of action would violate the Code of Ethics, they consult with other sociologists who are knowledgeable about ethical issues, with the ASA Executive Officer, the Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE), or with an authoritative body with expertise on the ethics of social science research such as an institutional review board.
- (b) When sociologists take actions or are confronted with choices in situations where there is a conflict between the Ethical Standards enunciated in the Code of Ethics and existing laws or legal requirements, they make known their commitment to the Code and take steps to resolve the conflict in a responsible manner. They consult with colleagues, the ASA Executive Officer, or the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE).

### *19.3 Fair Treatment of Parties in Ethical Disputes*

- (a) Sociologists do not discriminate against a person on the basis of having made an ethical complaint.
- (b) Sociologists do not discriminate against a person based on having been the subject of an ethical complaint. However, this does not preclude taking action based upon the outcome of an ethical complaint.

### *19.4 Reporting Ethical Violations of Others*

When sociologists have substantial reason to believe that there may have been a violation of these Ethical Standards by another sociologist, they may attempt to resolve the issue by bringing it to the attention of that individual, if an informal resolution appears appropriate or possible. Alternatively, they may seek advice about whether or how to proceed based on this belief, assuming that such activity does not violate any confidentiality

rights. Such action might include referral to the ASA Executive Officer, or to the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE), institutional authorities, or legal authorities.

*19.5 Cooperating with the Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE)*

Sociologists cooperate in ethics investigations or proceedings of COPE, and any resulting requirements from the American Sociological Association. In doing so, they make reasonable efforts to resolve any issues of confidentiality. Failure to cooperate may itself be a violation of these Ethical Standards.

*19.6 Improper Complaints*

Sociologists do not file or encourage the filing of ethics complaints that are frivolous, made in bad faith, knowingly false, or knowingly intended to harm the alleged violator rather than to protect the integrity of the discipline and the public.

**Note:** This revised edition of the American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics builds on the 1997 edition of the Code.