



International Sociological Association

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Code of Ethics

Approved by the ISA Executive Committee, Fall 2001

Introduction

The International Sociological Association's (ISA) Code of Ethics consists of a Preamble and four sets of specific Ethical Standards. Membership in the ISA commits members to adhere to it.

The Code of Ethics is not exhaustive, all-embracing and rigid. The fact that a particular conduct is not addressed specifically by the Code of Ethics does not mean the conduct is necessarily either ethical or unethical.

Preamble

Sociologists work to develop a reliable and valid body of scientific knowledge based on research and, thereby, to contribute to the improvement of the global human condition. The primary goals of the Code of Ethics, a symbol of the identity of the ISA, are (1) to protect the welfare of groups and individuals with whom and on whom sociologists work or who are involved in sociologists' research efforts and (2) to guide the behaviour and hence the expectations of

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ISA members, both between themselves and toward the society at large. Those who accept its principles are expected to interpret them in good faith, to respect them, to make sure they are respected and to make them widely known.

Each sociologist supplements the Code of Ethics *in ways* based on her/his own personal values, culture and experience. Each sociologist supplements, but does not violate, the standards outlined in this Code of Ethics. It is the individual responsibility of each sociologist to aspire to the highest standards of conduct.

The efficacy of a Code of Ethics relies principally upon the self-discipline and self-control of those to whom it applies.

1 Sociology as a field of scientific study and practice

As scientists, sociologists are expected to cooperate locally and transnationally on the basis of scientific correctness alone, without discrimination on the basis of scientifically irrelevant factors such as age, sex, sexual preference,

ethnicity, language,
religion or political
affiliation.

1.2. Group work,
cooperation and
mutual
exchanges
among
sociologists are
necessary for
sociology to
achieve its ends.
Sociologists are
expected to take
part in
discussions on
their own work,
as well as on the
work of other
sociologists.

1.3. Sociologists
should be aware
of the fact that
their
assumptions
may have an
impact upon
society. Hence
their duty is, on
the one hand, to
keep an
unbiased
attitude as far as
possible, while,
on the other
hand, to
acknowledge the
tentative and
relative
character of the
results of their
research and not

to conceal their own ideological position(s). No sociological assumption should be presented as indisputable truth.

1.4. Sociologists should act with a view to maintaining the image and the integrity of their own discipline; this does not imply that they should abandon a critical approach toward its fundamental assumptions, its methods and its achievements.

1.5. The principles of openness, criticism and respect for all scientific perspectives should be followed by sociologists in their teaching and professional practices.

1.6. Sociologists are expected to protect the

rights of their students and clients.

2 Research procedures

2.1. Sponsors

2.1.1. Research activities in sociology must often necessarily rely on private or public funding, and thus depend to a certain extent on sponsorship. Sponsors, be they private or public, may be interested in a specific outcome of research. Yet, sociologists should not accept research grants or contracts which specify conditions inconsistent with their scientific judgment of what are appropriate means of carrying out the research in question, or which permit the sponsors to veto or delay

academic
publication
because they
dislike the
findings.

2.1.2. Sponsors
should be clearly
informed in
advance of the
basic guidelines
of research
projects, as well
as of the
methods which
researchers are
willing to adopt.
Sponsors also
should be
advised of the
risk that the
result of an
inquiry may not
fit with their own
expectations.

2.1.3. Sponsors,
both private and
public, may be
particularly
interested in
funding
sociological
research for the
sake of their
own political
aims. Whether
or not they
share such aims,
sociologists
should not
become
subordinate to
them. They

should also refrain from cooperating in the fulfillment of undemocratic aims or discriminatory goals.

2.1.4. The conditions agreed upon between researchers and sponsors should preferably be laid down in written agreements.

2.2. Costs and rewards

2.2.1. Funds provided for sociological research should be used for the agreed purpose.

2.2.2. In a situation where sociologists are bidding competitively on projects, they should not agree to carry on research projects which are not sufficiently funded or compete with other bidders by the use of

further unfair
tactics not
consistent with
appropriate
scientific
standards.

2.3. Data gathering

2.3.1. As
scientists,
sociologists
should disclose
the methods by
which they
proceed as well
as the general
sources of their
data.

2.3.2. The
security,
anonymity and
privacy of
research
subjects and
informants
should be
respected
rigorously, in
both quantitative
and qualitative
research. The
sources of
personal
information
obtained by
researchers
should be kept
confidential,
unless the
informants have
asked or agreed
to be cited.

Should informants be easily identifiable, researchers should remind them explicitly of the consequences that may follow from the publication of the research data and outcomes. Payment of informants, though acceptable in principle, should be discouraged as far as possible and subject to explicit conditions, with special regard to the reliability of the information provided.

2.3.3. Sociologists who are being given access to records are expected to respect the privacy conditions under which the data were collected. They can, however, make

use of data gathered in historical archives, both private and public, under the legal conditions laid down in the country concerned and usually accepted by the international scientific community, and subject to the rules of the archive.

2.3.4. The consent of research subjects and informants should be obtained in advance. Covert research should be avoided in principle, unless it is the only method by which information can be gathered, and/or when access to the usual sources of information is obstructed by those in power.

3 Publication and communication of data

3.1. Data gathered in sociological research activities and research work constitute the intellectual property of the researchers, who are in principle also entitled to copyright. Should copyright be vested in a sponsor or in an employer, researchers should be entitled to fair compensation.

3.2. In principle, researchers have a right to submit their work for publication, or to publish it at their own expense.

3.3. Researchers have the right to ensure that their results be not manipulated or taken out of context by sponsors.

3.4. The contribution of scholars,

sponsors,
technicians or
other
collaborators
who have made
a substantial
contribution in
carrying out a
research project
should be
acknowledged
explicitly in any
subsequent
publication.

3.5. Databases
should not be
regarded as
being in the
public domain,
until the
researchers who
have assembled
them have
specified the
sources of their
data and the
methods by
which they were
constructed.
Information
about sources
and methods
should be made
available within
reasonable time.
Interim data
sets should be
available for
inspection of
their accuracy
by other
scholars.
[Note:

Statement
already adopted
by the ISA
Executive
Council in its
Colima Meeting,
26-27 November
1996]

3.6. Once
published,
information
about a research
project should
be considered to
be part of the
common
knowledge and
background of
the scientific
community.
Therefore, it is
open to
comments and
criticism to
which
researchers
should be
allowed to react.

4 Extra-scientific use of research results

4.1. The results
of sociological
inquiries may be
a matter of
public interest.
Their diffusion,
which is an
implication of
the fundamental
right of people to
be informed,

should not be hindered. Researchers, however, should be aware of the dangers connected with distortions, simplifications and manipulations of their own research material, which may occur in the process of communication through individual or mass media. Researchers should be able, and are entitled, to intervene to correct any kind of misinterpretation or misuse of their work.

4.2. Researchers should refrain from claiming expertise in fields where they do not have the necessary depth of research knowledge, especially when contributing to public discussion or policy debate.

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