

**Policy on Ethics and Student Research
Sociology & Anthropology Department
Mills College**

The Sociology & Anthropology Department at Mills College requires that all students conducting research adhere to the ethical guidelines put forth by the American Sociological Association, American Anthropological Association, or the American Association of Physical Anthropologists depending on the nature of the research to be undertaken. Students anticipating such research should familiarize themselves with and adhere to these guidelines in their entirety. The full text of these guidelines is available as follows:

American Sociological Association, Code of Ethics

<http://www.asanet.org/about/ethics.cfm>

American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics

www.aaanet.org/stmts/ethstmnt.htm

American Anthropological Association Statement on Ethnography and Institutional Review Boards

www.aaanet.org/stmts/irb.htm

American Association of Physical Anthropologists Code of Ethics

www.physanth.org/association/position-statements/code-of-ethics

Highlights of these guidelines include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. It is unethical for students to misrepresent themselves and their research to informants. Students must identify themselves to informants as students engaged in an anthropological or sociological research project or class assignment.
2. The student's paramount responsibility is to those they study. When there is a conflict of interest, these individuals must come first. Researchers must do everything in their power to protect the physical, social, and psychological welfare and to honor the dignity and privacy of those studied. This includes an informant's right to remain anonymous. When presenting their ethnographic data, whether in verbal, written or visual form, students must respect their informants' desire for privacy and anonymity. If an informant is to be identified, either in a written paper or through visual representations, the student must first obtain the informant's explicit consent.
3. Students may not study illegal cultural scenes. This is due to the potential of harm to themselves and risk to their informants (for example, if the ethnographer's notes were to be subpoenaed in legal actions against the informant). In addition, the Sociology & Anthropology Department takes the position that our undergraduate

students are “researchers-in-training.” We recognize that some research topics, particularly those involving what the American Anthropological Association terms “vulnerable populations,” is important work and may be suitable study populations for more experienced researchers, but still inappropriate for novice researchers. Therefore, students are discouraged strongly from conducting research with “vulnerable populations,” as set out in the following excerpt from the AAA Statement on Ethnography and Institutional Review Boards (p. 5):

Although most ethnographic research involves minimal risk, IRBs cannot presume that all ethnographic research involves no more than minimal risk. Ethnographic research can involve significant risks. Although ethnographers often observe and record public behavior that involves minimal risk to participants, if, for example, the public event is videotaped and used by the researcher or others for purposes that may harm the participant(s) and the identity of the participant(s) can be ascertained, the research involves higher risk. This is particularly true in research that involves working with vulnerable populations, such as those with a potentially stigmatizing illness (e.g., HIV/AIDS), individuals engaged in illegal activities (e.g., sex work, drug use), or those whose civil rights have been compromised.

It is the responsibility of the instructor to implement this policy in the classroom and ensure that students are fully aware of the ethical implications of their research. The instructor may impose sanctions in cases where the student fails to meet his or her ethical obligations as described in this document and the sources it references, up to and including the withholding of credit.

Proposals for all projects involving human subjects must be submitted for approval to the Human Subjects Review Board at Mills College before any research begins.
http://www.mills.edu/administration/provosts_office/human_subject_protocol_overview.php

Additional documents that may be useful for students include:
Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects ("the Common Rule")
<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/commonrule/>

United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights
www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

These guidelines were adopted October 25, 2013.
Thanks to the Anthropology Department at Macalester College for supplying the framework for this policy.