PREAMBLE

Sociological inquiry is often disturbing to many persons and groups. Its results may challenge long-established beliefs and lead to change in old taboos. In consequence such findings may create demands for the suppression or control of this inquiry or for a dilution of the findings. Similarly, the results of sociological investigation may be of significant use to individuals in power—whether in government, in the private sphere, or in the universities—because such findings, suitably manipulated, may facilitate the misuse of power. Knowledge is a form of power, and in a society increasingly dependent on knowledge, the control of information creates the potential for political manipulation.

For these reasons, we affirm the autonomy of sociological inquiry. The sociologist must be responsive, first and foremost, to the truth of his investigation. Sociology must not be an instrument of any person or group who seeks to suppress or misuse knowledge. The fate of sociology as a science is dependent upon the fate of free inquiry in an open society.

At the same time this search for social truths must itself operate within constraints. Its limits arise when inquiry infringes on the rights of individuals to be treated as persons, to be considered—in the renewable phrase of Kant—as ends and not as means. Just as sociologists must not distort or manipulate truth to serve untruthful ends, so too they must not manipulate persons to serve their quest for truth. The study of society, being the study of human beings, imposes the responsibility of respecting the integrity, promoting the dignity, and maintaining the autonomy of these persons.

To fulfill these responsibilities, we, the members of the American Sociological Association, affirm the following Code of Ethics:

CODE OF ETHICS

1. Objectivity in Research

In his research the sociologist must maintain scientific objectivity.

2. Integrity in Research

The sociologist should recognize his own limitations and, when appropriate, seek more expert assistance or decide not to undertake research beyond his competence. He must not misrepresent his own abilities, or the competence of his staff to conduct a particular research project.

3. Respect of the Research Subject's Rights to Privacy and Dignity

Every person is entitled to the right of privacy and dignity of treatment. The sociologist must respect these rights.

4. Protection of Subjects from Personal Harm

All research should avoid causing personal harm to subjects used in research.

5. Preservation of Confidentiality of Research Data

Confidential information provided by a research subject must be treated as such by the sociologist. Even though research information is not a privileged communication under the law, the sociologist must, as far as possible, protect subjects and informants. Any promises made to such persons must be honored. However, provided that he respects the assurances he has given his subjects, the sociologist has no obligation to withhold information of misconduct of individuals or organizations.

If an informant or other subject should wish, however, he can formally release the researcher of a promise of confidentiality. The provisions of this section apply to all members of research organizations (i.e., interviewers, coders, clerical staff, etc.), and it is the responsibility of the chief investigators to see that they are instructed in the necessity and importance of maintaining the confidentiality of the data. The obligation of the sociologist includes the use and storage of original data to which a subject's name is attached. When requested, the identity of an organization or subject must be adequately disguised in publication.

6. Presentation of Research Findings

The sociologist must present his findings honestly and without distortion. There should be no omission of data from a research report which might significantly modify the interpretation of findings.

7. Misuse of Research Role

The sociologist must not use his role as a cover to obtain information for other than professional purposes.
8. Acknowledgement of Research Collaboration and Assistance

The sociologist must acknowledge the professional contributions or assistance of all persons who collaborated in the research.

9. Disclosure of the Sources of Financial Support

The sociologist must report fully all sources of financial support in his research publications and any special relations to the sponsor that might affect the interpretation of the findings.

10. Distortion of Findings by Sponsor

The sociologist is obliged to clarify publicly any distortion by a sponsor or client of the findings of a research project in which he has participated.

11. Disassociation from Unethical Research Arrangements

The sociologist must not accept such grants, contracts, or research assignments as appear likely to require violation of the principles above, and must publicly terminate the work or formally disassociate himself from the research if he discovers such a violation and is unable to achieve its correction.

12. Interpretation of Ethical Principles

When the meaning and application of these principles are unclear, the sociologist should seek the judgment of the relevant agency or committee designated by the American Sociological Association. Such consultation, however, does not free the sociologist from his individual responsibility for decisions or from his accountability to the profession.

13. Applicability of Principles

In the conduct of research the principles enunciated above should apply to research in any area either within or outside the United States of America.

14. Interpretation and Enforcement of Ethical Principles

The Standing Committee on Professional Ethics, appointed by the Council of the Association, shall have primary responsibility for the interpretation and enforcement of the Ethical Code. The Committee shall

(a) Advise members of the Association of its interpretation of the ethical propriety of professional conduct through formal opinions of the Committee published from time to time in The American Sociologist, which opinions shall omit all references to the names of individuals or institutions;

(b) Recommend amendments to or clarification of the Ethical Code when they appear to be advisable;

(c) Receive complaints of violations of the Ethical Code by members of the Association, endeavor to settle complaints privately, and, if private settlement cannot be effected, investigate such complaints as the Committee shall determine to investigate, under Rules of Procedure from time to time adopted by the Committee and approved by the Council and the membership of the Association. If on the basis of its investigation the Committee by two-thirds majority of all its members determines that an ethical violation has occurred, the Committee shall communicate to the complainant and to the member charged with the violation the finding of the Committee, and it shall impose one or more of the following sanctions:

(i) Reprimand the member;

(ii) Suspend the membership of the member for a period to be determined by the Committee;

(iii) Request the resignation of the member;

or

(iv) Terminate the membership of the member;

and

(d) Receive requests that sanctions imposed herein be modified or revoked after a period of time, and take such action, including modification or revocation of the said sanctions, as the Committee in its discretion shall determine.

The Council of the Association shall:

(a) Constitute from among its members a committee which shall decide appeals from findings of ethical violations by the Standing Committee on Professional Ethics, on the record and without further hearing.
(b) Receive reports from the Committee on the disposition of complaints received by it, and approve the Committee's report to the membership of the Association of the types of complaints that have been filed with the Committee. The report to the membership shall not disclose the name of any person or persons whose past or proposed professional conduct has been called into question.

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Under Rule 14 of the Ethical Code of the American Sociological Association, the Standing Committee on Professional Ethics of the American Sociological Association is instructed to establish rules governing its own procedures. The following are the rules and procedures under which the Committee operates.

1. Pursuant to Section 14 (a) of the Ethical Code, the Committee will issue opinions with respect to the ethical propriety and conduct under the Ethical Code which the Committee determines to be of widespread interest.
   a. All opinions shall be adopted at a called meeting at which a quorum of four members is present, by a majority vote of the members present and voting.
   b. Opinions will not disclose the name of any person or persons whose past or proposed professional conduct has been called into question, and the Committee shall word its opinions to insure that the persons or institutions involved shall not be otherwise identifiable.
   c. Opinions involving past conduct will be made on such assumed factual circumstances as are deemed relevant by the Committee. Accordingly, unless investigation has been undertaken under Rule 2 hereunder, the Committee need not conduct an investigation or look to outside sources to determine the precise factual nature of the conduct involved.

2. With respect to investigations under Article 14 (c) of the Ethical Code, all complaints of violations of the Ethical Code received by members of the Council or at the Executive Office of the Association shall be immediately forwarded, without acknowledgment and without further communication, to the Chairman of the Committee.
   a. The Committee shall recognize complaints received from both members and nonmembers of the Association. A member of the Committee may file a complaint if he is aware of a possible violation of the Ethical Code but no complaint has been filed with respect to the violation.
   b. If the complaint does not involve a member of the Association, the Chairman of the Committee shall return the complaint to the complainant and advise him that no action on the complaint can be taken. If the complaint involves a member of the Association, the Chairman of the Committee shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint, shall send a copy of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee and advise the complainant that he will be notified of any action taken by the Committee. The Chairman may request elaboration and clarification when he deems it necessary. Anonymous complaints shall not be recognized, and are normally to be destroyed upon receipt.
   c. After acknowledgement of the complaint and the receipt of specification of charges by the complainant, if any, the Chairman shall mail copies of the complaint and other documents received by him with respect to the complaint to all the members of the Committee. The Committee members shall, by simple majority vote at a meeting of the Committee or by mail ballot, determine whether the complaint should be investigated, or dropped, or whether further correspondence with the complainant is necessary before a decision whether or not to investigate the complaint could be undertaken or whether such private settlement efforts should be undertaken as may be deemed appropriate.
   d. If the Committee decides that the complaint should be dropped, the complainant shall be so notified.
   e. If the Committee decides that the complaint should be investigated, the Committee shall notify the member that a formal charge of violation of the Ethical Code is pending against him. It shall advise the complainant and the accused member that a hearing will be conducted by the Committee
at a place within the county or city in which the member against whom the complaint is made resides, or, if the Committee so determines, at the place in which the alleged offense was committed. The accused member shall be served with a copy of the complaint and all other documents supplied to the Committee by the complainant, and advised that he has the right to introduce witnesses and evidence in his own behalf and to cross-examine witnesses. Prior to the hearing, all documentary evidence to be introduced by the complainant, and the names of all witnesses to be offered in support of the charges, shall be supplied to the accused member. If the accused member refuses to participate in the investigation, the Committee may continue its investigation of the complaint without his participation.

f. No fewer than four members of the Committee may conduct a hearing. Any member of the Committee may examine or cross-examine witnesses in any matter relevant to the complaint at any time, in the discretion of the presiding chairman. At the hearing, the evidence in support of the complaint shall be presented by a representative of the Standing Committee, and the member shall have full opportunity to answer the charges. The hearing may be adjourned as necessary, and the Committee may introduce rebuttal witnesses.

g. The Committee may employ a court reporter or stenographer to record, and, if necessary, to transcribe the proceedings of the hearing.

h. The hearing of the complaint before the Committee shall be private, and all persons shall be excluded except those necessary for the conduct of the investigation, unless the accused member specifically elects in writing to have a public hearing within ten days prior to the hearing.

i. Committee investigations need not be conducted strictly in accordance with the procedure of a court in the trial of a criminal case. However, functional rules of evidence followed in a court of law will be generally employed. The Committee shall be authorized to retain legal counsel to advise and assist in the Committee investigation.

j. At the conclusion of the introduction of all evidence, the member against whom the complaint has been made, or his counsel, or both, shall be permitted to argue matters in defense or mitigation of the complaint.

k. Thereafter, the full Committee shall discuss the matter and conduct its further discussion in private, based upon the evidence adduced at the hearing. The quorum at a meeting to decide the case shall consist of five members of the Committee, and any decision to impose sanctions shall be by a two-thirds majority of all the members of the Committee. If the Committee concludes that no disciplinary action is justified, it shall dismiss the complaint and promptly advise the accused member of its action. The Committee may, under certain circumstances, find it necessary to defer decision for further study and investigation. However, utmost diligence should be used to complete the investigation on the date fixed for the hearing.

l. If the Committee concludes that disciplinary action is merited, then it shall make a written report of the proceedings and advise the complainant and the accused member of the sanction imposed, and advise the member that he has a right to appeal within thirty days the finding of the Committee on the existing record and without further hearing to such members of the Council as have been designated by the President of the Association to hear such appeals. The member shall be advised that notification of appeal should be filed with the Executive Officer of the Association.

m. The Committee shall report to the Council all action taken by the Committee, including findings of ethical violations and sanctions imposed with respect to all complaints received by it, provided that the Committee shall not advise the Council of any finding of ethical violation until the period for appeal to the Council has expired, or, if an appeal has been filed, until a decision on the appeal has been rendered. The Committee shall report to the membership of the Association the types of complaints that have been filed with the Committee, which report shall be approved by the Council. The report to the membership shall not disclose the name of any person or persons whose past or proposed professional conduct has been called into question.

3. The effective date of these Rules of Procedure is September 1, 1971.