

Department Of Anthropology

Study Materials for 4rth SEM

Paper - ANTACOR10T

Ethics in Social Anthropology and also in Fieldwork

Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is a branch of Philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong behaviour. Ethics is the branch of study dealing with what is the proper course of action for man. It answers the question, "What do I do?" It is the study of right and wrong in human endeavours. At a more fundamental level, it is the method by which we categorized our values and pursue them.

Ethics are the moral principles that a person must follow irrespective of the place and time. Behaving ethically involves doing the right thing at the right time. Research Ethics focus on the moral principles that researchers must follow in their respective field of research.

Ethics serve as a guide to moral daily living and helps us judge whether our behaviour can be justified. Ethics refers to society's sense of the right way of living our daily lives. It does this by establishing rules, principles, and values on which we can base our conduct.

The role of ethics in our society is very important because it is the basic beliefs and standards that make everything run smoothly. Ethics are involved in all organizations and institutions around us whether it be political, medical, lawful, religious or social.

Ethics is a requirement for human life. It is our means of deciding a course of action. Without it, our actions would be random and aimless. There would be no way to work towards a goal because there would be no way to pick between a limitless number of goals. Even with an ethical standard, we may be unable to pursue our goals with the possibility of success. Ethics is concerned with the conduct of human beings. Ethics does not prescribe a specific set of rules or policies. Instead, it provides a framework for evaluating problems and determining an appropriate course of action. Ethical analysis should reflect both internationally accepted norms and logically relevant cultural values.

Anthropological Ethics require protecting the dignity, privacy and anonymity of the people whose any field worker studies. Field work is always based on trust and as anthropologists involve themselves in continually expanding range research situations, ethical dilemmas will increase. Three main ethical principles must guide any field worker i.e. acquiring the informed consent of the people who are to be studied, protecting them from any risk and respecting their privacy and dignity. The Present Researchers face ethical challenges in all stages of the study, from designing to reporting. These include anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, researchers' potential impact on the participants and vice versa.

Ethics of doing fieldwork, not only involves the task of presentation of the fieldworker before the people, but it also entails an explicit statement on the methodology of data collection. All the researchers would also abide by the ethical perspectives of fieldworker.

Anonymity is an assurance that subjects' identities will not be disclosed in any way. **Confidentiality** is a promise to keep the identities of the subjects known only to the researcher. **Informed Consent** is achieved if the subject knows what the study is, understands his or her level of confidentiality in the study, comprehends the objectives of the study and agrees to co-operate.

Considering the nature of qualitative studies, the interaction between researchers and participants can be ethically challenging for the former, as they are personally involved in different stages of the study. Therefore, formulation of specific ethical guidelines in this respect seems to be essential. The present paper aimed to discuss the necessity to develop explicit guidelines for conducting qualitative studies with regard to the researchers role. As there is no statistical analysis in qualitative studies, the researcher has to both evaluate what he or she observes and to interpret it.

Social Anthropologists carry out their professional research in many places around the world; some where they are at home and others where they are in some way foreign. In Social Cultural Anthropology, as field study is very much essential and most of the survey based on the life-cycle, inter relationship, ritual pattern, developmental pattern and other social and cultural aspects of man, then it is very obvious to care about conveniences of the local people of the studied area.

Anthropologists should endeavour to protect the physical, social and psychological well-being of those whom they study and to respect their rights, interests, sensitivities and privacy. They should try to minimize disturbances both to subjects themselves and to the subject's relationships with their environment.

Ethical review should protect researchers, subjects and institutions in field sites from harm. Anthropologists and ethnographers have to be aware of the range of ways their activities can cause distress to others. Ways of showing respect for research subjects can be embedded in both the content of research questions and the manner in which they are delivered. The basic ethical principles to be maintained include doing good, not doing harm and protecting the autonomy, wellbeing, safety and dignity of all research participants. Researchers should be as objective as possible and avoid ethnocentricity. Any deception of participants should be fully justified. They should not knowingly misrepresent or attempt to prevent reporting of misconduct, or obstruct the scientific research of others.

Ethical & legal dilemmas occur at all stages of research in the selection of topic, area of population, choice of sponsor and source of funding, in negotiating access, making research bargains and during the research itself conducting fieldwork, in the interpretation and analysis of results and in the publication of findings and the disposal of data.

Ethics in data collection

Most of the data is collected through surveys, interviews, or observation during fieldwork or in research. It's important to keep in the mind of the present researcher like the following when he or she collect data for their fieldstudy, research works and other related works --

- It is good practice to let people know who they are (their name, organization and reason for collecting data) when the researcher ask them if they would like to participate.
- They should have permission from participants (people providing the data) and they should be made aware that their involvement is voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw from any active data collection or intervention program at any point without pressure or fear of retaliation.
- Avoid or minimize anything that will cause physical or emotional harm to participants. Make participants aware of any potential harms prior to their participation.

- Try to remain neutral and unbiased. Don't let the personal preconceptions or opinions interfere with the data collection process.
- Collecting data (i.e. through surveys) is often done under the assumption that information provided is confidential and the findings will be anonymous. Researchers or fieldworkers should convey the participants when they will have to break confidentiality (e.g. in the case of harm to themselves or someone else) and whether results will be anonymous or not.
- When collecting data, try to avoid taking advantage of easy to access groups simply because they are there (this is called "convenience sampling"). Data should be collected from those participants who are most helpful to the fieldworker as well as researcher in order to answer their questions.
- Be respectful of people's time and when possible, compensate them for it.
- Be sure to protect the data which the present researcher collect from people. Do not leave anything with personal information in a place that can easily be accessed by people who do not need to see the data. If possible, keep the information in a secure, or locked location.
- After data are analyzed it is always good to share the results back to the participants.