

Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research

Preamble

Political science research uses a variety of distinctive philosophical and methodological approaches to study a wide range of topics. Political scientists seek to produce knowledge of value to broader society, but in the course of their research they may encounter ethical issues. These issues can be multidimensional and complex; they can differ across disciplinary sub-fields and settings; and in many cases they can differ from those faced by other disciplines.

Given this complexity, it is especially important for researchers to think through the possible effects, intended and unintended, of research projects. Such thinking involves consulting one's conscience, colleagues both inside and outside the researcher's most immediate circle, and the APSA ethics principles and guidance detailed below. Because ethical issues, perspectives, and priorities may vary according to methodological approaches and research settings (e.g., surveys versus field experiments versus ethnographic research), researchers should consider a range of ethical perspectives. Discussing ethical issues with colleagues outside of one's specialty is especially important to thinking more deeply and broadly about the potential effects on research participants, members of research teams, communities, and polities.

These principles and guidance express values shared across the many sections and sub-fields that comprise political science. They are general statements of what researchers should do, but recognize that differences in methodology and research setting may lead to differences in how these values relate to the ethical conduct of research. These principles are not intended to be rules, requirements, or prohibitions, and they are not presented as a checklist for ethical research. Instead, these principles and guidance are intended to promote reflection and help researchers consider the ethical issues that arise in the design, execution, and dissemination of their research. In situations where the application of the principles is unclear, or the principles appear to conflict, researchers should use their best judgement in deciding whether and how to proceed.

These principles are also intended to promote openness and broader discussion about ethical dimensions of political science research. Importantly, they are not intended to be tools for obstructing research or issuing sanctions. When editors, peer reviewers, institutional administrators, funders, and other parties in positions of power have concerns about the ethicality of a research project, they should encourage discussion

within the research community and beyond about whether the research violates a principle; if so, whether the research constitutes a justifiable exception to the principle; and the way in which the research project relates to the values expressed in these principles. In this way the principles and guidance can evolve to become more representative of the values of the discipline, more informative, and more useful.

These principles are intended to apply to political science researchers and political scientists serving as journal editors as they conduct their research related activities. Researchers should engage the principles in the design, implementation, and dissemination of their research projects, and journal editors should be careful to not impose conditions for publication that require political science researchers to violate these principles. These principles do not apply to political science researchers or journal editors in their non-research related activities or in their private lives.

General Principles:

- 1. Political science researchers should respect autonomy, consider the wellbeing of participants and other people affected by their research, and be open about the ethical issues they face and the decisions they make when conducting their research.**
- 2. Political science researchers have an individual responsibility to consider the ethics of their research related activities and cannot outsource ethical reflection to review boards, other institutional bodies, or regulatory agencies.**
- 3. These principles describe the standards of conduct and reflexive openness that are expected of political science researchers. In some cases, researchers may have good reasons to deviate from these principles (for example, when the principles conflict with each other). In such cases, researchers should acknowledge and justify deviations in scholarly publications and presentations of their work.**

Power

- 4. When designing and conducting research, political scientists should be aware of power differentials between researcher and researched, and the ways in**

which such power differentials can affect the voluntariness of consent and the evaluation of risk and benefit.

- a. When conducting research with low-power or vulnerable participants and communities, researchers should be especially careful to respect their autonomy, protect them from harm, and treat them fairly.**
- b. When conducting research with powerful parties, including some public officials, other actors, institutions, and corporations, covert or deceptive research with more than minimal harm may sometimes be ethically permissible. (See guidance for further discussion of this principle and its application.)**

Guidance (Power)

Public officials and powerful actors:

“Public officials” include elected, appointed, and “merit” public servants at the international, federal, state, and local levels of government. Appointed and merit public officials include “street-level” bureaucrats who interact directly with the public (e.g., police officers and teachers), cabinet-level appointees (bearing greater responsibility for public policy), and all administrative levels in between. In their capacities as public officials, public servants have specific duties toward the public according to law, tradition, custom, and norms. Powerful actors may include traditional and religious as well as leaders in non democratic systems. Assessing the performance of public officials and other powerful actors and their role in political systems is seen by many to be both a specific responsibility of political science and a public service.

Because public officials and other people who seek, hold, or wield power in the political sphere are accountable to the public in ways that are different from ordinary citizens, harms such as those related to reputation and employability may sometimes be permissible. Accordingly, the need to protect unconsenting participants from these harms might not apply to some research on public officials and other powerful actors. The degree to which these harms may be permissible depends on:

- the obligations and duties of the public officials;
- the official’s role in designing, influencing or implementing public policy. (For example, a public school superintendent bears greater policy responsibility to the

general public than the front-line teacher; a powerful political donor has a greater role in influencing policy than an ordinary citizen.)

These exceptions do not apply to officials' private lives or to other types of harm. Researchers should be aware of how reputational harms could lead to other, less permissible, harms.

US-based researchers should also be aware that if their research is federally funded, or if they work at institutions that require approval from an institutional review board (IRB) for all human subjects research, they will be expected to comply with their institutional IRB. In the past, researchers could request a public official's exemption in their IRB application; this changed in January 2019. The new regulations no longer offer an exemption for research on elected and public officials. Accordingly, researchers should understand that:

- APSA opposed deletion of the public officials exemption from the regulations and indicated so during the public comment period;
- whereas harms to reputation and employability were permissible under the public officials exemption, IRBs now have no regulatory basis to allow these harms for research studies;
- certain types of scholarly activities, such as an "oral history, journalism, biography, literary criticism, legal research, and historical scholarship" are not considered to be "research" and therefore not subject to IRB processes and regulations [Federal Register, § 11.102(l)(2), p. 7261].

Institutions and corporations:

Regarding research critical of institutions and corporations, the American Political Science Association endorses the position set forth in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Tri-Council Policy Statement:

"Research in the form of critical inquiry, that is, the analysis of social structures or activities, public policies, or other social phenomena, requires an adjustment in the assessment of consent.... Where social sciences or humanities researchers seek knowledge that critiques or challenges the policies and practices of institutions, governments, interest groups or corporations, researchers do not need to seek the organization's permission to proceed with the proposed research. If institutional approval were required, it is unlikely that research could be conducted effectively on such matters as institutional sexual abuse or a government's silencing of dissident scientists" (Canadian Institutes, 2014, pp.33-34).

" ... some research, involving critical assessments of public, political or corporate institutions and associated public figures, for example, may be legitimately critical and/or opposed to the welfare of those individuals in a position of power, and may cause them some harm. There may be a compelling public interest in this research" (Canadian Institutes, 2014, p. 35).

Researchers designing and conducting research critical of institutions and corporations should be aware that they might still need permission from individuals with whom researchers are interacting.

For more guidance, see Principle 5: Consent and Principle 6: Deception.

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, December 2014.
http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2-2014/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf [Accessed: January 18, 2019].

Consent

- 5. Political science researchers should generally seek informed consent from individuals who are directly engaged by the research process, especially if research involves more than minimal risk of harm or if it is plausible to expect that engaged individuals would withhold consent if consent were sought.**
 - a. Researchers should ensure that consent is informed and voluntary; they should not use coercion or undue influence to secure consent. Researchers should be especially careful to respect participants' autonomy when conducting research with low-power or vulnerable participants and communities.**
 - b. Researchers should seek continuing consent in research settings where risks of harm change during a study.**
 - c. Observation of public behavior does not usually directly engage subjects and so does not invoke this principle of consent.**

- d. **There are some cases in which it might be appropriate for researchers to alter or forgo the consent process. Relevant considerations include when the research is minimal risk, when seeking consent increases the risks for participants, when the research design requires the use of deception or misrepresentation, or when researchers are studying powerful actors and institutions. In each case, researchers should use their best judgment, and explain and justify their decisions in publications and presentations. (See guidance for further discussion of this principle and its application.)**
- e. **In publications and presentations, researchers should disclose from whom they sought consent, why consent from these parties was meaningful and sufficient, and whether and how consent was documented. If consent was not obtained, researchers should explain that decision.**

Guidance (Consent)

Elements usually included in consent processes

In general, when seeking consent, researchers should usually communicate:

- researcher name and affiliation (and contact information when appropriate)
- the general purpose of the research
- an explanation of what participation entails
- potential risks to participants
- potential benefits to participants and others (or clarification that none are expected)
- whether and how identities and data will be protected
- sources of financial support for the research (this is essential for participants to assess risk in some settings, including conflict zones or polarized political settings)
- any other information relevant to the study, setting, or context.

Relevant considerations when assessing appropriateness of forgoing consent processes

Costs of consent. In some situations—for example when studies involve everyday public message displays, via radio or billboards—seeking consent might be impracticable or might generate intrusions for participants without substantially enhancing autonomy. In such cases, researchers should disclose their research related activities to directly engaged participants whenever possible. In other cases, documenting consent, or even informing participants, might increase the risk of harm to participants. These considerations might

provide grounds for altering or forgoing the consent process altogether in cases where there is no more than minimal risk of harm.

Research Design. In some political science research, the possibility of “Hawthorne effects” (the idea that behavior can change simply because subjects know it is being studied) can be substantial. Such considerations might justify not seeking consent in some cases, though not when there are more than minimal risks of harm. For more guidance, see Principle 4: Power and Principle 6: Deception.

Deception

6. Political science researchers should carefully consider any use of deception and the ways in which deception can conflict with participant autonomy.

- a. Relevant considerations for researchers contemplating the use of deception include whether deception is necessary for the integrity of the research, whether the research involves more than minimal risk of harm, whether it is plausible to expect that engaged individuals would withhold consent if fully informed consent were sought, whether debriefing of subjects is possible, and the relations of power between subject and researcher.**
- b. In publications and presentations, researchers should disclose if deception was used, explain that decision, and describe steps taken to respect participant autonomy.**

Guidance (Deception)

Types of Deception

Deception can take at least four forms:

- a. Identity deception: Deception about who you are (a researcher in political science) or with whom you are working.
- b. Activity deception: Deception about what you are doing (e.g. research for social science) or the situation confronting research participants.
- c. Motivation deception: Deception about the reasons for the research or the use to which the research or data will be put.
- d. Misinformation: Providing false information about the state of the world—e.g., by providing unreliable or inaccurate information about political candidates.

Deception can be an act of commission or an act of omission. That is, researchers can deceive research participants by providing false information or by providing information or formulations intended to mislead participants (whether or not the information is literally true). Not telling participants that they are in a research study – commonly termed “covert research” – is a form of deception.

Concerns with deception extend beyond participants to deception of others involved in research, including research staff and research partners. In the case of research partnerships, researchers should ensure that partners are not deceived regarding the purposes of research and the questions that can be addressed with the research.

If researchers engage in deception, they may compromise the autonomy of research participants. However, in some research designs, blinding of participants or research staff is required for research integrity.

Strategies for respecting autonomy when deception is employed.

In studies where deception is used, researchers should consider alternative ways of respecting participant autonomy. This might include:

- seeking alternative forms of consent, assent, or review (for example asking a small sample of representative participants to assess the study, or asking for consent retroactively and allowing participants to withdraw their data if they so choose);
- debriefing participants at the conclusion of the study

When justifying their use of deception, researchers should discuss the basis on which they anticipated no more than minimal harm, and how they addressed these and other relevant concerns. If a study involves more than minimal harm, use of deception requires exceptional justification. For more guidance, see Principle 4: Power.

Harm and Trauma

- 7. Political science researchers should consider the harms associated with their research.**
 - a. Researchers should generally avoid harm when possible, minimize harm when avoidance is not possible, and not conduct research when harm is excessive.**

- a. **When assessing possible harms, researchers should not limit their concern to physical and psychological risks to the participant. Researchers should also recognize social and economic harms; harms to other parties affected by the research, and harms to research assistants and staff. (See guidance for further discussion of this principle and its application)**

Guidance (Harm)

When assessing possible harms, political scientists should not limit their concern to physical and psychological risks to the participant. The researcher also should consider:

- social and economic harms;
- harms to others as well as to direct participants that are caused by the research process; and harms to others as well as to direct participants that are caused by the dissemination of research findings, e.g., a breach of confidentiality that reveals the identity of a dissident or her associates who were not studied;
- these considerations of harm are irrespective of participants' behavior, i.e. whether it is immoral or criminal.

Importantly, a researcher's obligation to protect participants from harm sometimes extends beyond what might be required by an IRB or other regulatory bodies.

Political scientists recognize that there may be exceptions to this general principle, but exceptions require strong justification. For example, when the subject of study causes severe harm to other people and when the study promises to stop, reverse, or reduce these harms, the researcher's obligations to the person may be outweighed by competing obligations to prevent harm to others.

Researchers should identify and justify potential and realized harms in scholarly publications and presentations of their work.

- 8. Political science researchers should anticipate and protect individual participants from trauma stemming from participation in research.**
 - a. **Researchers should avoid traumatization and re-traumatization when possible, minimize traumatization and re-traumatization when**

avoidance is not possible, and not conduct research when the potential for traumatization or re-traumatization is excessive.

- b. Researchers should not intentionally induce traumatization and re-traumatization, and should not expose participants to traumatization or re-traumatization without participants' informed consent. (See guidance for further discussion of this principle and its application.)**

Guidance (Trauma)

Research may generate painful emotional or psychological responses from participants, as they are exposed to or asked to discuss sensitive topics. In some instances, the research study itself could cause trauma. In other cases (“re-traumatization”), the research may ask participants to recall past injuries, such as human rights abuses.¹ Trauma may be more likely when research involves war or sexual violence, but trauma may emerge in a wide range of research settings. Political scientists should understand that not all research that asks participants to recollect past events – even traumatic ones – necessarily deepens trauma. Consenting participants may judge that their narration of past events is beneficial to themselves or others even though doing so may be painful or traumatic.

When designing a study, the researcher has an obligation to reasonably and realistically anticipate the potential for trauma and re-traumatization. In scholarly publications and presentations of their work, researchers should disclose how they assessed and managed the risk of trauma to participants. Specifically, they should report the prospective steps they took to identify and manage the risk of trauma (for example, excluding certain participants, avoiding some themes, and renewing consent); report whether participants actually experienced trauma; and describe the steps they took to address trauma if and when it occurred.

Political scientists who reasonably anticipate that participation in research might cause traumatization or re-traumatization have three additional obligations: (1) during the conduct of research, researchers should regularly renew consent by asking participants whether they wish to continue (particularly if signs of distress emerge); (2) researchers should identify local resources to which participants might feasibly turn to help them address resulting trauma and re-traumatization; and (3) researchers should report in

¹ In the remainder of this item, “trauma” is used to refer to trauma that results directly from the researcher’s project, as well as retraumatization triggered by the researcher’s efforts.

scholarly publications and presentations of their work how they minimized the risk of trauma.

When identifying resources to which participants might feasibly turn for help, researchers should be aware that, in some research settings, the *de jure* existence of a resource may not guarantee its *de facto* availability.

Those engaging in research that is possibly traumatizing (or re-traumatizing) should have appropriate training in how to conduct such research ethically.

Confidentiality

- 9. Political science researchers should generally keep the identities of research participants confidential; when circumstances require, researchers should adopt the higher standard of ensuring anonymity.**
 - a. Researchers should clearly communicate assurances of confidentiality or anonymity to the participant during the consent process.**
 - b. In some cases, it might be appropriate for researchers to not promise confidentiality (for example, research on powerful elites or oral histories in which the participants prefer to be identified). In these cases, researchers should clearly communicate the lack of confidentiality to the participants, and acknowledge and justify their decisions in scholarly publications and presentations of their work.**
 - c. Even when researchers have not promised confidentiality or anonymity, they should assess possible risks and harms to participants and bystanders when deciding whether or not to identify participants and their responses in scholarly publications and presentations of their work.**
 - d. When confidentiality or anonymity is promised, the researcher must remain attentive to these guarantees. If research materials are shared, researchers should ensure that the material is sufficiently redacted so that even well-informed parties cannot infer the identity of any person to whom specific statements or information can be attributed. In cases**

where the risks to participants are particularly high, researchers should decline to share any material. The researcher bears ultimate responsibility if they decide to share materials and cannot transfer accountability for this decision to editors, reviewers, or any other party.

- e. Researchers who determine that it would be unethical to share materials derived from human subjects should be prepared to justify their decision to journal editors, to reviewers, and in oral and written reports of their research findings. (see guidance)**

Guidance (Confidentiality)

Political scientists must make a good faith effort to anticipate the ways in which research participants could be harmed by breaches of confidentiality, to anticipate the ways in which confidentiality can be breached, and to design their research projects accordingly. For example, some projects may require the researcher to adopt the higher standard of ensuring anonymity, which means not collecting identifying information, including audio and video recordings. Other projects may require researchers to destroy certain identifying information after data collection and analysis. Threats to confidentiality can come in many forms, including carelessness, data sharing, cybersecurity failures, freedom of information (FOIA) requests, subpoenas, and mandatory reporting. Researchers should discuss the steps they took to protect participant confidentiality or anonymity in scholarly publications and presentations of their work.

Assurances of confidentiality or anonymity are essential to informed consent; they therefore comprise a core ethical commitment. The researcher should clearly explain to research participants the meaning and implications of confidentiality (or anonymity) and how she will ensure the confidentiality (or anonymity) of the participant's identity. It may not be possible to grant some participants' desires to be recognized in the research if doing so would compromise the identities of other participants who prefer confidentiality.

The researcher is obliged to respect assurances given to participants. The researcher should not retroactively change the commitment to confidentiality; doing so would not only break the promise to the participant and the general obligation to confidentiality (or anonymity), but also could hinder the work of future scholars. If identities are revealed despite commitments to confidentiality or anonymity, research participants and their

associates may fear exposure to harm or risk, and may be less inclined to participate in future research.

The researcher bears sole responsibility and accountability for the decision to share materials derived from research participants (if permitted in the informed consent process); accountability for this decision does not reside with editors, reviewers, or any other party. Even if an editor requires data sharing as a condition of publication, this does not release the researcher from the ethical obligation to protect the confidentiality of their participants. In this case, the researcher must continue to decline, and if need be, pursue publication in another venue. When deciding not to share materials derived from research participants, researchers should be prepared to justify their decision to journal editors, reviewers, and in oral and written reports of their research findings.

Political scientists who feel they are being pressured by reviewers, editors, other scholars, or other parties to engage in practices that are disrespectful or potentially harmful to participants should contact the APSA Committee on Professional Ethics, Rights and Freedoms.

Under some cases, the principle of confidentiality may not apply to organizations or institutions. See the guidance at Principle 4, Power, on research on institutions and corporations.

Impact

10. Political science researchers conducting studies on political processes should consider the broader social impacts of the research process as well as the impact on the experience of individuals directly engaged by the research. In general, political science researchers should not compromise the integrity of political processes for research purposes without the consent of individuals that are directly engaged by the research process.

- a. There are some cases in which research that produces impacts on political processes without consent of individuals directly engaged by the research might be appropriate. Relevant considerations include when the research presents minimal risk of negatively affecting individual experience or impacting political outcomes, when researchers are studying powerful actors**

- or institutions, or when deception or misrepresentation is otherwise justifiable.
- b. **Studies of interventions by third parties do not usually invoke this principle on impact. Researchers who partner with third parties – for example with governments, electoral commissions, or political parties to learn about their interventions – should understand, however, that partnerships do not obviate all ethical considerations. In particular, researchers should consider the broader social impacts of the research process when deciding whether to engage in the partnership. Researchers should be transparent with the partner about the researcher’s objectives and likely risks and benefits arising from the research partnerships.**
 - c. **This principle is not intended to discourage any form of political engagement by political scientists in their non-research activities or private lives. (See guidance for further discussion of this principle and its scope and application.)**
 - d. **In publications and presentations, researchers should report likely impacts on the experiences of participants, any impacts on broader political processes, and whether and from whom they sought consent.**

Guidance (Impact)

Research that intervenes in political processes often requires special consideration. In such instances, the researcher’s obligations to respect autonomy and avoid harm often will extend beyond what might be required by regulatory review bodies. The potential harm, though diffuse, may be significant enough that the research cannot be conducted ethically.²

Minimal Risks. The assessment of risks should take account of the broader political setting in which work is conducted. For instance, some political science research includes

² Although participant observation is not usually considered to be an "intervention" (because it typically does not seek to measure the effect of an introduced variable but, rather, seeks to understand existing processes, culture, and meanings), when participant observers intervene and manipulate processes in order to study them, the above conditions would apply.

direct interventions in political processes, such as invitations for citizens to sign a petition advocating a given policy change. In democratic systems with widespread protections of political rights, such petition signing likely entails minimal risk of harm. However, in authoritarian systems, petition signers may plausibly be viewed as unwelcome critics of the government and might be targeted for reprisal. In such cases, risk of harm may be more than minimal. Inviting citizens to voice their positions anonymously, in which the researcher does not record any name or other identifying information, may return the research to minimal risk of harm. An example of a study in which consent is not sought (and plausibly cannot be sought) but plausibly involves minimal risk, is one in which researchers place Facebook ads reproducing campaign advertising. Such interventions are minimal risk to individuals if they are similar to what individuals encounter in their usual lives and they are of minimal social risk if they are not done at a scale liable to alter electoral outcomes and do not inject false or misleading information into political processes. Claims to exceptions based on minimal risk should describe plausible impacts at the individual and/or societal level.

Individuals directly engaged by research processes. Researchers who seek to carry out research that intervenes in a political process should respect the autonomy of and minimize harms to participants and other people directly engaged by the research process. Individuals who are directly engaged by the research processes include individuals from whom researchers, or their teams, gather data or who are subject to interventions implemented by researchers or their teams. For instance, if a research study provides a citizen with information on how to complain against an official soliciting bribes, the citizen is directly affected; the official is possibly also affected, but indirectly through actions taken by the citizen. If a researcher encourages a politician to employ a canvassing technique on prospective voters, the politician is directly engaged and the voters are indirectly engaged.

Indirectly affected individuals. In some instances, interventions implemented for research purposes might have plausible adverse effects on individuals that are not engaged by a research process. In such cases, researchers should consider whether consent of such indirectly affected parties is also needed or not, particularly if there are foreseeable adverse impacts for vulnerable populations.

Approvals. Approval from electoral or other authorities can help provide justification but does not obviate researchers from all ethical considerations. For example, a corrupt electoral authority might only allow interventions that weaken democratic processes and support an incumbent power. In such cases, researchers should describe likely impacts

and carefully assess competing claims and explain their decisions in publications and presentations of the research.

Third parties. In some cases, researchers work with third parties to learn about the effects of interventions implemented by these parties, for instance to understand the effects of election observers or anti-corruption campaigns led by civil society organizations. Such partnerships can generate valuable learning. However, third-party collaborations do not transfer all ethical responsibility to the third party. Partnerships should not be formed merely to function as vehicles to avoid the responsibilities attendant to ethical research: for instance, organizations created and funded by researchers to implement interventions that facilitate research would not be considered partnerships for this purpose. Broader social impacts are also a consideration that researchers should take into account when forming partnerships. For instance, partnering with a government agency to prevent corruption may be justifiable, even if the intervention produces foreseeable harms for some, such as prosecution of corrupt officials. Partnering with a government to study torture techniques likely would not be. Researchers advising partners around interventions should be transparent around the purposes of research and likely risks and benefits arising from the research partnerships. Finally, in scholarly publications and presentations of their research, researchers should disclose the nature of collaborative relationships, including their role and contribution at each stage of the project as well as the nature of funding and/or privileged access granted by the third party to the researcher.

Consultancies. Scholars engaged in commissioned research should strive to meet the criteria listed above if they intend to publish or present in scholarly fora on the basis of this research.

Disclosures. Regardless of whether they satisfy the criteria stated in this principle and its guidance, researchers should be open about their design; their use of consent or deception; the individual, social, and political impact; and their efforts to prevent, minimize, or address any harm. Researchers should identify and discuss these issues in scholarly publications and presentations of their work and public discussions of their research.

Impact arising from use of research. These considerations and concerns for impact do not generally apply to the impact of knowledge generated by research activities. For example, there is generally no concern or harm if a book reaches conclusions unfavorable to a policy or political actor and these conclusions affect opinion and votes. For another

example, consider a laboratory experiment in which outcomes of interest are behaviors in the laboratory; if voluntary and informed participation changes participants' opinions and, however unlikely, this changes behavior in a later real election, these considerations do not apply.

Laws, Regulations, and Prospective Review

11. Political science researchers should be aware of relevant laws and regulations governing their research related activities.

Political scientists should be aware of relevant laws and regulations as they apply to both the research process and any activities associated with the research. This includes laws and regulations regarding prospective review and permitting as well as laws and regulations related to the activities of the research project. When a research project is conducted in more than one jurisdiction, or when a scholar is based in one jurisdiction and conducts research in another, the researcher should be aware of relevant laws and regulations in each setting.

- a. Researchers should acknowledge whether their research related activities complied with relevant laws and regulations, and provide a reasoned justification for any deviations in scholarly publications and presentations. Researchers conducting research in settings that require regulatory review should explain whether they sought and received regulatory approval for their studies in scholarly publications and presentations of their research. Additionally, researchers conducting research in settings that have local review or permitting requirements should explain whether they complied with these requirements in scholarly publications and presentations of their research. (See guidance for further discussion of this principle and its application.)**

Guidance (Laws, Regulations, and Prospective Review)

Political scientists should be aware of local and national laws and regulations regarding the activities of the research project. Political science researchers who think that laws and regulations are inappropriate should be prepared to provide reasoned justification as to why they did not comply with the law. In general, justifications for breaking the law should be based on ethical considerations rather than convenience. When possible, researchers should anticipate the ways in which laws might threaten the protection of

human subjects and plan accordingly. For example, adhering to the law could result in harm to research subjects or assistants, or members of their communities; or, employing a virtual private network to protect data is illegal in the research setting. In the same way, researchers should be conscious of risks that may arise for subjects or assistants if research procedures do not comply with local laws.

Political scientists should generally comply with local review or permitting requirements. When researchers think that local review requirements are inappropriate, they should be prepared to provide reasoned justification as to why they did not comply with local approval processes. For example, when local review may be inconsistent with protection of research participants, when there is reason to believe that review bodies do not fairly represent the interests of the people under study, when political elites try to use those approval processes to prevent research on topics that might jeopardize their power, or when researchers make a good faith effort and discover that the review or permitting system is non-functioning or repressive of the research topic or approach. In these cases, researchers should seek input from area specialists (regardless of whether such review is required by an IRB or other regulatory body). Researchers seeking advice from colleagues with expertise in a given geographic area are encouraged to seek a range of views from scholars of different intellectual and political outlooks.

Researchers who believe that an IRB or other prospective review or regulatory body is inappropriately restricting their academic freedom should contact the APSA Committee on Professional Ethics, Rights and Freedoms.

- b. Researchers should understand that compliance with the law and approval by a review or permitting body is not always sufficient for ethical research. The requirements for ethical research may go beyond what the law, IRBs, U.S. regulatory criteria, and other review and regulatory bodies may require. Researchers should understand that they are responsible for the ethicality of their research. (See guidance for further discussion of this principle and its application.)**

Guidance (Responsibility)

Individual researchers and the Association should:

- promote learning *within* campus communities *and across* universities about the actual ethical dilemmas involved in social science research with human research participants; and

- provide guidance to researchers who encounter ethical issues not captured by the IRB charge and regulatory framework.

When researchers think that IRB review requirements increase risks to their participants or inappropriately restrict their academic freedom, they may appeal to the APSA Committee on Professional Ethics, Rights and Freedoms. For example, when review may be inconsistent with the protection of research participants, when there is reason to believe that review bodies do not fairly represent the interests of the people under study, or when political elites try to use those approval processes to prevent research on topics that might jeopardize their power.

Researchers should be sensitive to contextual and cultural differences. Research that seems harmless in one context may be harmful or traumatizing in another. Locally-sensitive prospective review (formal or informal) can help avoid unanticipated harms or problems.

- c. **Researchers should be aware that in some cases prospective review or regulatory bodies, journal editors, or other parties might require researchers to engage in practices that are disrespectful or potentially harmful to their participants or otherwise unethical. In these cases, researchers should not proceed with the research project or dissemination activity and should contact the APSA Committee on Professional Ethics, Rights and Freedoms. (See guidance for further discussion of this principle and its application.)**

Guidance (Conflicts)

Individual members and the Association should:

- Help IRBs and other regulatory bodies develop a better understanding of political science research, and the way in which the regulatory criteria and the values of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, should apply to political science research; e.g. the way in which respect for persons should apply to research on corruption, or the way in which beneficence should apply to research on public officials.
- Assist individual scholars in contesting unfair and unreasonable IRB decisions and other review or permitting bodies, in this way promoting some

form of appeals process and, over time, professional learning about research ethics particular to political science.

- Encourage researchers to share their experiences in working with IRBs and other review and permitting bodies in an effort to improve those processes, promote community capacity building and human participants protections, and help the APSA code evolve. For example, ad hoc and systematic evidence identifying exceptional practices, both desirable and undesirable, would facilitate constructive dialogue on the ethical issues for political science research.
- Work with US institutions of higher learning, both individually and collectively, to improve their review systems in ways that promote transparency, evidence-based decision making, and respect for researcher expertise in methodology, methods and, as relevant, knowledge of field site norms and culture.

Shared Responsibility

12. The responsibility to promote ethical research goes beyond the individual researcher or research team.

- a. Mentors, advisors, dissertation committee members, and instructors should help students and subordinates identify and address ethical issues related to research;**
- b. Graduate programs in political science should include ethics instruction in their formal and informal graduate curricula;**
- c. Editors and reviewers should encourage researchers to be open about the ethical decisions they made in conducting their research; encourage research on research ethics; and provide editorial expressions of concern or solicit independent commentaries when publishing ethically troubling research; and**
- d. Journals, departments, and associations should incorporate ethical commitments into their mission, bylaws, instruction, practices, and procedures.**