



# Ethics and Development Studies

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## ***What is Development Studies?***

- An interdisciplinary field: includes political science, anthropology, sociology, economics, international relations etc.

## ***What are the ethical questions for development studies research in developing countries and (convincing HRECs and DERCs)***

- Risk: working with poor people raises questions/assumptions of vulnerability, e.g slum dwellers; beggars; women; children/street kids;
- Consent from research participants and others
- Now look at the Ethical principles of: Respect; Justice, Beneficence; research merit and integrity; in development studies research
- In a COVID-19 world they come into even sharper focus

# Respect

- This means the research has due regard for: participants beliefs; customs and cultural heritage;
- For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders covered under a different set of protocols which contains among other things written consent in advance
- For other countries the UN Convention on Indigenous Peoples is a good starting point, and key to this is continuous engagement and ongoing consent;
- Caution on groups or people claiming to represent the local communities e.g. NGOs, local government bodies and even private concerns such and mining/logging companies etc. You may need an extra process on top of these.
- Children must give consent as well as their guardians; they need to be well informed appropriate to age. See Rights of the Child
- Street children et al need to ensure young persons safety, security, and well being are supported throughout the research – local partner.

# Justice

- ‘expectations and opinions of participants and their communities’ are considered;
- Lawfulness of the research. You don’t need national approval but ‘establishing local academic and institutional affiliations’ is important. Be aware of the safety of researcher and assistants. In some contexts women (and minority) researchers may be vulnerable;
- Research visas are difficult to get but business visa with introductory letter is often sufficient. Tourist visas need to have a strong justification as they are risky.
- Research outcomes to be shared with research participants. Need to think how this may occur and how any Intellectual Property is respected and ‘owned’. Attribution.

# *Beneficience*

- Assess the burden and benefits of the research; ‘political and social features’;
- For example randomized controls trials; informed consent and will the control get the ‘treatment’;
- Studies around ideological/political systems e.g democracy can make people uncomfortable; normative research
- Consent how to obtain it; oral consent.
- participant observation where ongoing, consent from time to time may be important, consent of venue owner;
- Incidental observation without explicit consent e.g at a demonstration

# Research Merit and Integrity

- The key issues are that the research complies with local ethics processes or similar. The key is that the researcher is in a position to provide the participants 'due respect and protection' (4.8.7).
- Much research in the development space is involved in quality assurance processes such as evaluations for donors NGOs etc. A lot of this research is aimed at, for example, identifying positive results from project interventions. It is important in these types of research to avoid 'leading' questions and the like that suggest the answer being sought.
- It is important to make it clear that no particular answer is being sought. In practice this is difficult, but it is important to participants that they are not being directed or limited in what they can say.

Thank you