DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH METHODS

Week 2, Lesson 3:Ethics in Development Studies & Development Research

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Rajshree Bedamatta, PhD
Department of Humanities &
Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati
rajshree@iitg.ac.in

What we will cover in today's lecture

1. Questions of ethics in the process of research for development
2. Codes of ethics
3. Responsibilities to respondents
4. Responsibilities to colleagues
5. Wider accountability

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Question of ethics in research for development

- Medical sciences origin of statements of ethics
- Central principle of biomedical codes of ethics
- Ethical principles for social sciences
  - First formulated in 1942- CUDOS
  - **C**ommunalism- research results are public property
  - **U**niversalism- independence of gender, race, colour or creed
  - **D**isinterestedness- results should not be manipulated to serve personal profit or ideology
  - **O**rganised **S**cepticism- criticism and self-criticism of research process and results
- Regulations and codes of conduct – Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth(ASA), British Sociological Association (BSA), Social Research Association (SRA), American Sociological Association

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajashree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Thinking through ethical issues in design, data collection, and analysis

Explaining purpose	• How to explain? What language to use? What details are critical?
Promises and Reciprocity	• What is in it for the respondent?
Risk Assessment	• Risks? Psychological stress? Legal liabilities? Political repercussions? How to handle?
Confidentiality	• Reasonable promises of confidentiality and anonymity?
Informed consent	• What kind? How to get? Mutual agreements
Data access and ownership	• Who will have access to data? For what purposes? Who owns the data? Who will benefit economically from publishing?
Interviewer need for debriefing	• How are the interviewers going to be affected? How to let off the steam?
Confidant and advisor	• Who will be the researcher's confidant and counsellor?
Data collection boundaries	• How hard will you push for data? What won't you do?
Ethical versus legal	• What ethical framework and philosophy informs your work beyond whatever may be required by law
Permission to undertake research	• Specific regulations for obtaining research permissions

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajasree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Relations With and Responsibilities Towards Research Participants

- Ethics and Methods
  - Method of inquiry and ethics
  - Ethical dilemmas of interviewing
- Ethical Issues of Field Studies
  - Protecting research participants and honouring trust
  - Avoiding undue intrusion
  - Negotiating informed consent
  - Rights to confidentiality and anonymity
  - Fair return for assistance
  - Participants' intellectual property rights
  - Participants' involvement in research

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Protecting research participants and honoring trust

- Physical, social and psychological well being of participants
- Most anthropologists for example, would maintain that their paramount obligation is to research participants
- Sometimes, it may not be possible to fully guarantee research participants' interests. In such cases development researchers may consider in advance whether they should pursue that particular piece of research or not

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Negotiating informed consent

- Necessary information- *Purpose, consequences, identity of funders and sponsors, use of data, possible harm, data security, degree of anonymity and confidentiality*
- Conditions which constitute an absence of consent
- Consent in research is a process
- Use of technical data gathering devices
- Collecting information from proxies
- Future use of data collected

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Rights to confidentiality and anonymity

- Right to remain anonymous
- Respecting the ‘private space’
- Anticipating potential threats to anonymity and confidentiality
- Unintentional compromises of anonymity
- Honouring guarantees made of confidentiality
- Respecting measures taken by other researchers

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajashree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

An example – consent and confidentiality

Studying the problems girls face in Surkhet, Nepal

A study of the difficulties girls face in Ramghat and Ghusra villages of Surkhet district, Nepal, produced a video documentary of girls' voices and a 'safe environment for girls project' in Ramghat. How were ethical issues addressed?

Informed consent was obtained from village development committees, school teachers, and NGOs before undertaking any fieldwork. Before starting the discussion with the various groups, the objectives of the research were outlined. The individual interviews with adolescent girls were kept confidential and not disclosed in their village. The names of the informants were not given in the report and pseudonyms were used. The individual girls for case study were chosen by the girls themselves and reasons were explained in the group before choosing the individual girls, to reduce the group's expectations.

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

To protect the girls, the draft video for girls' voices was shown to the children whose ideas were documented in filming. Once it was shown to the children, they requested and were excited to show the video to their parents too. The researchers again returned to the village and filmed the parents talking about the girls' difficulties and then showed them the film of girls' voices. In the video, lots of views were against the parents' behaviour towards daughters. Surprisingly their brothers and parents were convinced by the girls' ideas and agreed that what they said was happening in their village. Then the parents agreed to the video being shown to any audience.

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Responsibilities towards colleagues

- Individual responsibility
- Conflicts of interest and consideration for colleagues
- Sharing research materials
- Collaborative and team research
- Researcher safety
- Responsibilities towards research students and field assistants
- Responsibilities towards women field researchers and field assistants
- Supporting southern researchers

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Relations with and Responsibilities Towards Funders and Employers

- Clarifying roles, rights and obligations
- Obligations to sponsors, funders and employers
- Negotiating 'research space'
- Relations with gatekeepers

Relations With Own and Host Governments

- Conditions of access
- Cross-national research
- Open research
- Legal and administrative constraints

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Responsibilities to the Society

- Widening the scope of social research
- Considering conflicting interests
- Maintaining professional and scholarly integrity

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Wider accountability of research

Structures to assist in making the researchers accountable

- An advisory group for the research
- At national level
  - National laws, administrative regulations, reference groups
- Research ethics committees
- At community level
- Making information available

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rachree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Ethical issues checklist in development research

- Is the research necessary?
- Is the research well planned as a project, and integrated into a programme of practical work?
- Have you considered the specific ethical issues raised by the project and how to address them?
- How will informed consent be obtained from the respondents?
- Are you providing accessible information about your project?
- What level of confidentiality and anonymity can you offer to participants? And how can they be effectively informed about this?
- Is there appropriate stakeholder participation in the project?

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Ethical issues checklist in development research- Contd

- Are you offering appropriate return for assistance?
- Are respondents able to your version of the information they have given you?
- How will you ensure that the information is appropriately fed back to those who were researched?
- What systems are in place to ensure that you learn from your experience?
- How are respondents to be informed of, or consulted on, the results of the research?
- Assess any risks to field researchers and work out ways to minimize them

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

References used for this lecture

- Britha Mikkelsen, *Conclusion on Ethics and Interventions (Chapter 8)* in Methods for Development Work and Research: A New Guide for Practitioners, 2005, Sage
- Laws, S., Harper, C., Jones, N., & Marcus, R. (2013). *Research Ethics (Chapter 13)* in Research for development: A practical guide. Sage.
- "Ethical Guidelines for good research practice", Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA), 2011
- Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter, Doing Development Research, 2006, Sage Publications.
- Andrew Sumner and Michael Tribe, International Development Studies: Theories and Methods in Research and Practice, 2008, Sage Publications.
- Alan Thomas and Giles Mohan (eds.) Research Skills for Policy and Development: How to find out fast, 2007, Sage

For a comprehensive literature on the topics covered in this lecture it is also suggested that students go through the reference list of the above cited papers.

Development Research Methods
Prof. Rajshree Bedamatta
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati