

ETHICAL ISSUES AND GEOGRAPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Geographical researchers must endeavour to address ethical issues in two main areas. When collecting data they should ensure that the safety and integrity of the people and/or the environment they are investigating are preserved.

Secondly, they have a duty to ensure that the research they do and the conclusions they may reach are valid and reliable.

1. When conducting questionnaires with members of the public be they in person, by phone, by letter or online they should ensure :-

- Questions are clear and easily understandable
- Little or no personal data is requested
- Only data related to the topic under investigation is requested
- No harm can come to the interviewees
- Interviewees privacy is maintained
- There is anonymity and confidentiality
- Interviewees understand the purpose of the investigation
- Interviewees have the opportunity to give informed consent. A copy of the information page of any questionnaire should be included in the work to show you have done this

2. If detailed interviews take place on a one to one basis with more open questions the researcher should be careful not to influence the interviewee :-

- The so called interviewer effect can take place based on the person doing the interview
- Interviewers should set aside personal values
- The interviewer should be careful in the way that questions are phrased and not present leading questions
- The interview may become more of an open discussion and the interviewer should be aware that their demeanour and even dress can influence the response of interviewees

3. The researcher should ensure no bias in the way they collect the data, the way questions are phrased or in the way they analyse the data :-

- The integrity of the data is paramount
- There should be no researcher bias
- The researcher should develop hypotheses, perhaps expressed as Null Hypotheses, but should keep an open mind
- Analysis of the data should be fair
- Any sampling undertaken should be representative of the target population from which it is drawn. If it may not be this should be explained

4. Any photographs taken should truly represent the situation they are suppose to illustrate :-

- If members of the public are included consent should be given by them for use of the photos
- No cropping or altering of any photos should be undertaken to try to show what the researcher thinks they should