

# Human Ethics in Research

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## Rick's Example

- In contemplation of experiments with a new soporific drug, we would appreciate your procuring for us a number of women ...
- We received your answer but consider the price of 200 a woman excessive. We propose to pay not more than 170 marks a head. If agreeable, we will take possession of the women. We need approximately 150 ...
- RECEIVED: the order of 150 women. Despite their emaciated condition, they were found satisfactory. We shall keep you posted on developments concerning this experiment ...
- The tests were made. All subjects died. We shall contact you shortly on the subject of a new load ...

## Another Example

Holocaust hypothermia research: 100-200 died due to submersion in ice water or sub-zero temperatures for hours



## Ethical Dilemma

Holocaust hypothermia research: 100-200 died – but many more were saved based on the results



How is this different?

## Ethical Dilemma

Even if we reject the experiments as unethical, is it acceptable to use the results after the fact?



## Another Example

- First conducted at Yale, subsequently repeated
- Extremely influential study in Germany
- Changed a whole generation to an odd attitude of “occasionally violent pacifists”

### Public Announcement

**WE WILL PAY YOU \$4.00 FOR ONE HOUR OF YOUR TIME**

#### Persons Needed for a Study of Memory

\*We will pay five hundred New Haven men to help us complete a scientific study of memory and learning. The study is being done at Yale University. \*Each person who participates will be paid \$4.00 (plus 50¢ carfare) for approximately 1 hour's time. We need you for only one hour; there are no further obligations. You may choose the time you would like to come (evenings, weekdays, or weekends).

\*No special training, education, or experience is needed. We want: Factory workers Businessmen Construction workers Clerks Salespeople City employees Professional people White-collar workers Laborers Telephone workers Barbers Others

All persons must be between the ages of 20 and 50. High school and college students cannot be used.

\*If you meet these qualifications, fill out the coupon below and mail it now to Professor Stanley Milgram, Department of Psychology, Yale University, New Haven. You will be notified later of the specific time and place of the study. We reserve the right to decline any application.

\*You will be paid \$4.00 (plus 50¢ carfare) as soon as you arrive at the laboratory.

TO: PROF. STANLEY MILGRAM, DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY, YALE UNIVERSITY, NEW HAVEN, CONN. I want to take part in this study of memory and learning. I am between the ages of 20 and 50. I will be paid \$4.00 (plus 50¢ carfare) if I participate.

NAME (Please Print) .....

ADDRESS .....

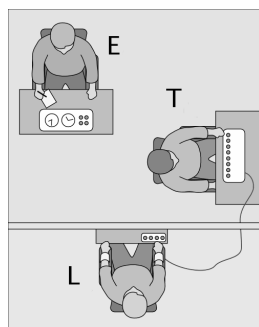
TELEPHONE NO. .... Best time to call you .....

AGE ..... OCCUPATION ..... SEX .....

CAN YOU COME: WEEKDAYS ..... EVENINGS ..... WEEKENDS .....

## Milgram's "Memory Study"

- Volunteers “randomly” assigned as Teacher (T) or Learner (L)
- Wrong answer punished by electric shocks (15V to max. of 450 V)
- Experimenter in uniform or lab coat provides instructions
- Filmed and shown in schools in 70s and 80s



## We elected this guy as foreign minister



## Highest compliment a teacher can make:



“Your child is argumentative and disrespects authority”

## Was that an ethical study

- Would you approve it?

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- Would you approve it?
- Would not be approved today.

## Principles of human ethics in research

- Free and informed consent
  - Full disclosure, if possible
  - Right to withdraw at any time
- Minimize Harm
  - Psychological/Physical
  - Maintain confidentiality, Anonymity
- Maximize Benefit
  - Benefit for research subjects
  - Relevance and validity of study

## Formal Tri-Council Policy

- MRC (Medical Research Council)
- SSHRC (Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council)
- NSERC (Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council)

These three councils together issue a national human research ethics policy, which the U of A has abides:

<http://tinyurl.com/yfkyfkk>

## When do you need human ethics approval?

- As RenR student, most likely if you conduct interviews as part of your research.
- Formal or informal interviews, as long as they are systematic (same questions to multiple persons)
- Not required if providing the information is their job, if they report facts.

## How to get human ethics approval?

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- You apply together with supervisor on-line
- Supervisor must attend an interview if requested by ethics board

## Elements of an application

- Simplified **Research Proposal** for review by Ethics board (is it relevant or waste of time?)
- **Appendices** of questionnaires, method details etc.
- **Information Sheet** for participants describing the research.
- **Consent Form** (or procedure to obtain implied or verbal consent)

## What the ethics board evaluates

- **Research Proposal:** is it relevant or waste of time?
- **Appendices:** necessary and sufficient to get the results?
- **Information Sheet:** Full disclosure, appropriate language for target audience?
- **Consent Form:** Vulnerable groups, power difference?

## Other considerations

- **Confidentiality:** data security, anonymous if possible, anonymize if possible, destroy personal information after completion.
- **Potential Harm:** Benefits must clearly outweigh risks.
- **Compensation:** Should not be undue inducement
- **Safety:** ... also of researchers and graduate students.

## Timelines

- Monthly deadlines.
- Usually approved within 30-60 days.
- Propose what you think makes sense (not what the forms seem to imply as right).
- <http://hero.ualberta.ca/>