

Ethics and Research

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from Christian Science Monitor



<http://dilbert.com/strips/comic/2011-09-05/>



"Doctor" Sid finds yet another subject for his electric-chair experiments

from Saul Greenberg

Milgram Experiment

- 1960s experiments to understand authority figures and obedience.
- Very controversial study and a classic example that is often given of what NOT to do in experimental design.
 - It has actually been REPEATED over the years!
- A similar experiment was done at Stanford in the 1970s using the prisoner/guard model and also later seen as unethical.

Institutional Review Boards

- IRB Committees review experimental designs and request changes if elements of the design raise concerns.
- There are exemption categories, but they are very narrow.
- While biomedical and socio-behavioral studies are the main types that motivated this, any study with humans is typically subject to review.

Example Readings

- Belmont Report
<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html>
- Research Ethics
<http://www.ugresearch.umd.edu/researchethics.php>
- When is an IRB Required?
<http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/RCO/New/IRBProcess.html#Review>
- Consent Form guidance
<http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/RCO/New/IRBForms.html#consentform>

Stress Happens

Taking part in **any** type of testing can be stressful to the participant.

- Performance anxiety even if they are testing their product, not you.
- Feeling foolish or uninformed even if the real cause is what you are testing hasn't been built well.
- Thinking about whether others have done things faster or better or different than you.



Bang
Head
Here

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

The NUMBER ONE RULE is to always treat your participants with respect!

Remind them that they can pause or stop ANY TIME THEY WANT. Do not show disappointment if they do. Thank them for their time and let them leave.

Respect their time

Don't waste their time.

- Have everything prepared and tested and set up before they arrive.
- Don't have them doing things that you don't care about.
- Thank them for their time and help at the end.

Respect their curiosity

Keep them informed.

- Make it clear what you are testing (which is NOT them).
- Ask if they have any questions and answer those that you can and let them know you can answer the others after the experiment is over.
- If something goes wrong because what you are testing broke, let them know that and how long it might be if you try to fix it on the spot.

Respect their comfort

Make sure they have a comfortable working space.

- This could be a good chair, fresh air, etc.
- A dorm room with dirty laundry around is not good 😊
- Give them breaks if the experiment takes a while.
- If something goes wrong, don't show emotions which make the participant think they did something wrong.
- Remind them that they aren't being tested, you are.

Respect their privacy

A part of respect is privacy.

- Keep data confidential.
- Don't do testing in public spaces.
- Do not discuss experiment details with them before or afterwards in a public space.
- When writing reports, make sure there is no way to figure out who you are discussing in anecdotes.
- If videos were made for data collection, do not post them anywhere public.

Facebook, News Feeds, and Emotions

In July, researchers at Facebook published outcomes of a study that looked at how emotions of one user can influence the emotions of their friends. As part of this they manipulated over half a million news feed (some to show more positive posts and some to show more negative posts).

The way they performed this study, public reaction, and the reactions of researchers seems to be the start of a new conversation about Internet research, informed consent, and ethics.