Day 07: Ethics and social science experimentation

Erin Rossiter

February 15, 2022

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  - V3 of syllabus (let's look)
    - any other topics come up?
  - Comments on HW5 RMD's
- This week:
  - Wrapping up first unit on experiment essentials
    - Enough to start paper
  - Office hours tonight and Friday
- Next week:
  - Moderation and mediation
- Rest of the semester:
  - First draft of final paper due March 22
    - Pre-reg with more (1) motivating front-end text and (2) explanations/justifications for decisions

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- IRB
- Common concerns in polisci
- Open science big picture

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- Investigators have failed to respect humans throughout history
- Nazi war crimes in WWII were a turning point to make efforts to ensure protection of human subjects in research
  - Nuremburg Code (1947)
  - 10 standards
  - physicians must follow for research on human subjects
  - two highlights for us:1. voluntary informed consent – protects the right of the individual to control their own body2. risks must be weighed against the expected benefits
  - became a prototype for similar, future efforts

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- Stanford prison experiment (1971)
  - » experimenter did conclude early, but not when participants asked to withdraw

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  - » formalized a regulated IRB process through local institutional review boards
    - also overseen by the Office of Human Research Protections (within the United States Department of Health and Human Services)
    - so, ND IRB is registered with and monitored by OHRP
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  - » standard any government-funded research in the US is held
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Institutional review board (IRB)

- reviews *methods* and *purpose* of research to ensure it is ethical
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  - protects *rights* and *welfare* of human subjects
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IRB for social sciences

Big picture concepts for social science

- Again, two big picture points (should) shape ethics considerations and every step of IRB review
  1. consent
  2. risks vs. benefits (person and society as a whole)
- Federally funded matters
- Special populations matter
  - children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, and economically or educationally disadvantaged persons

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- just initial approval by one IRB member
- minimal risk
  - » *risk that is not greater than what one encounters in ordinary daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests*
- not identifiable information
  - » *Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, or pathological or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that* ***subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers*** *linked to the subjects.*

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- reasons for full:
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    - sensitive populations
    - sensitive topics
  - intentional deception

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Review type and consent

Exempt

- minimal risk & exempt from regulations
- submission but no need for renewal or informed consent
  - » *do it anyway*

Expedited

- minimal risk but **not** exempt from regulations
- submission needs annual renewal and informed consent
- most of what you'd be doing as grad student

Full

- greater than minimal risk
- full board meets
- resubmitted on an annual basis

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- consent given with knowledge of all aspects of the study that are relevant to the subject's decision to participate
- possible to request waiver
  - » risk vs benefit analysis

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ND form and templates

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- some templates in GitHub repo, more available
- when in doubt, just email Director of Research Compliance, Eric Felde

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APSA Guidelines

Thinking beyond federal regulations

General Principles:

1. **Political science researchers should respect autonomy, consider the wellbeing of participants and other people affected by their research, and be open about the ethical issues they face and the decisions they make when conducting their research.**

2. **Political science researchers have an individual responsibility to consider the ethics of their research related activities and cannot outsource ethical reflection to review boards, other institutional bodies, or regulatory agencies.**

3. **These principles describe the standards of conduct and reflexive openness that are expected of political science researchers. In some cases, researchers may have good reasons to deviate from these principles (for example, when the principles conflict with each other). In such cases, researchers should acknowledge and justify deviations in scholarly publications and presentations of their work.**