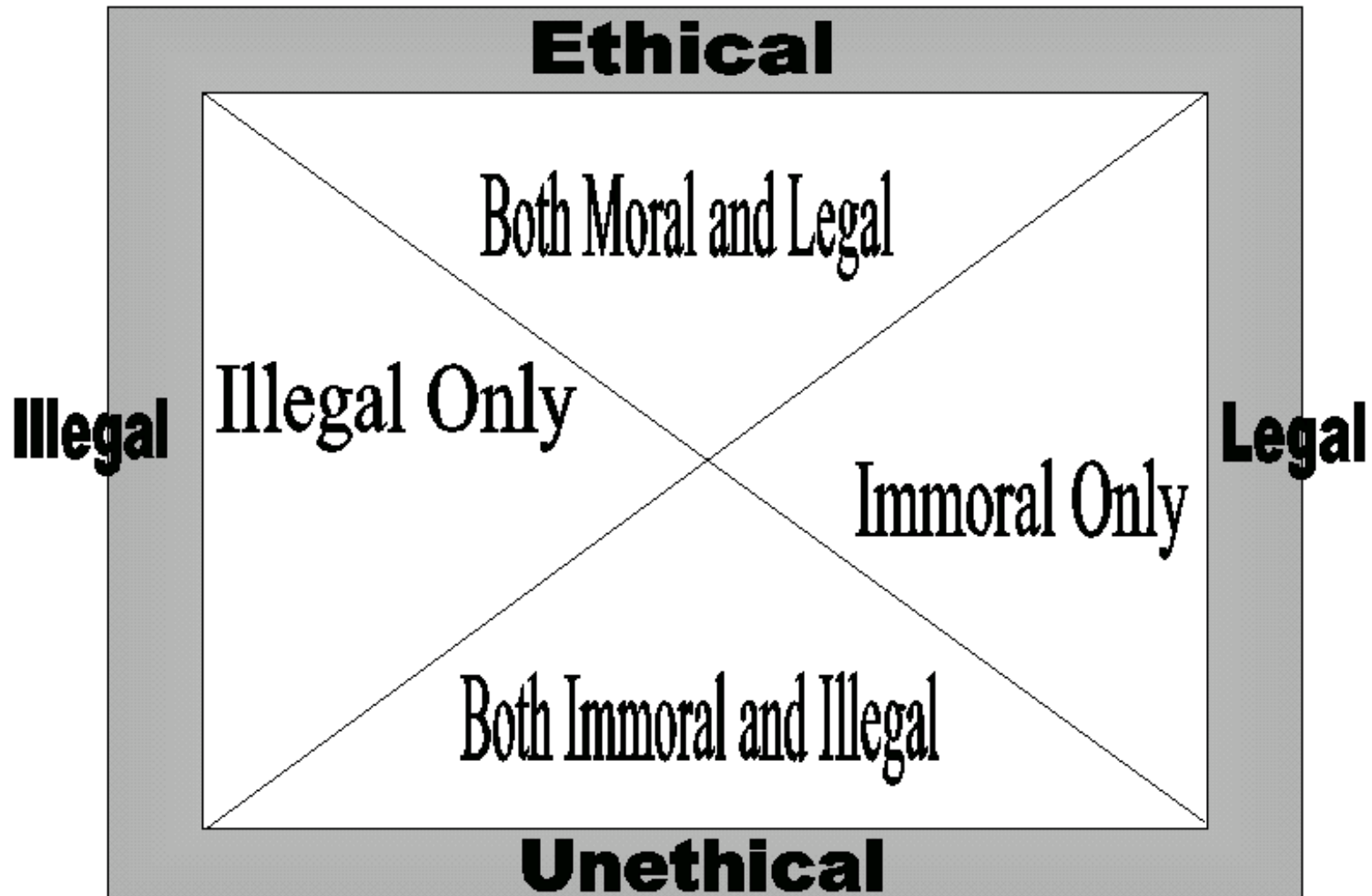


# Ethics in Research

# Ethics

- **Absolute?**
- **Situational?**
  
- **Durkheim (1925) on complexity of morality**



Adapted from Newman, L. W. (2000). *Social Research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. Allyn and Bacon.

# Keys to Ethical Research: Voluntary Participation

- Can a minor consent to a survey? The law actually varies, but wisdom suggests get parental consent.
- Some mentally incapacitated adults cannot assert the right of participation.
- Students in a class: gray area as they may feel pressured to participate.
- What about observation?

# Keys to Ethical Research: *Do No Harm*

- Identity of respondents must be protected at all costs. This is a moral imperative.
- Is it harmful to identify kinds of people who may be deviant?
- Obviously, “outing” a closeted gay would be harmful and may lead to legal action.
- What if subjects are recognizable in the reporting (*i.e.* an informant in an LA gang study was *killed*)?

# Keys to Ethical Research: Anonymity

- It must be impossible to identify respondents, but pure anonymity would mean that the researcher does not know the identity of the subject.
- Note: Complete anonymity is actually very rare (interviews are almost never anonymous), but care must be taken with data after gathered and forever.
- Paradox: anonymity may mean the resulting data is meaningless

# Keys to Ethical Research: Confidentiality

- Confidentiality means the researcher *will not* reveal the identity of the subject.
- Ohio sociologist spent four months in jail for refusing to reveal his sources in the drug trade
- Recommended: Use Double Blind System (destroy intermediate lists!)

# Keys to Ethical Research: Deception

- *All* laboratory research involves lying to some degree, so this is a hard area.
- Some research is simply *impossible* without deception. Question is: is it important to do so. Medical experiments using placebos are a case in point.
- Real Issue: Is there harm to the subject?



# Debriefing

- Is it important to tell the subjects the truth about your study?
- Will it cause more harm than good?
- Is it ethical – *not* to debrief?

# Human Subjects Review Boards

Tuskegee experiment 1932-1972

"An authentic, exquisitely detailed case study of the consequences of racism in American life."  
—The New York Times Book Review

## BAD BLOOD

The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment



The modern classic of race and medicine updated with an additional chapter on the Tuskegee Experiment's legacy in the age of AIDS

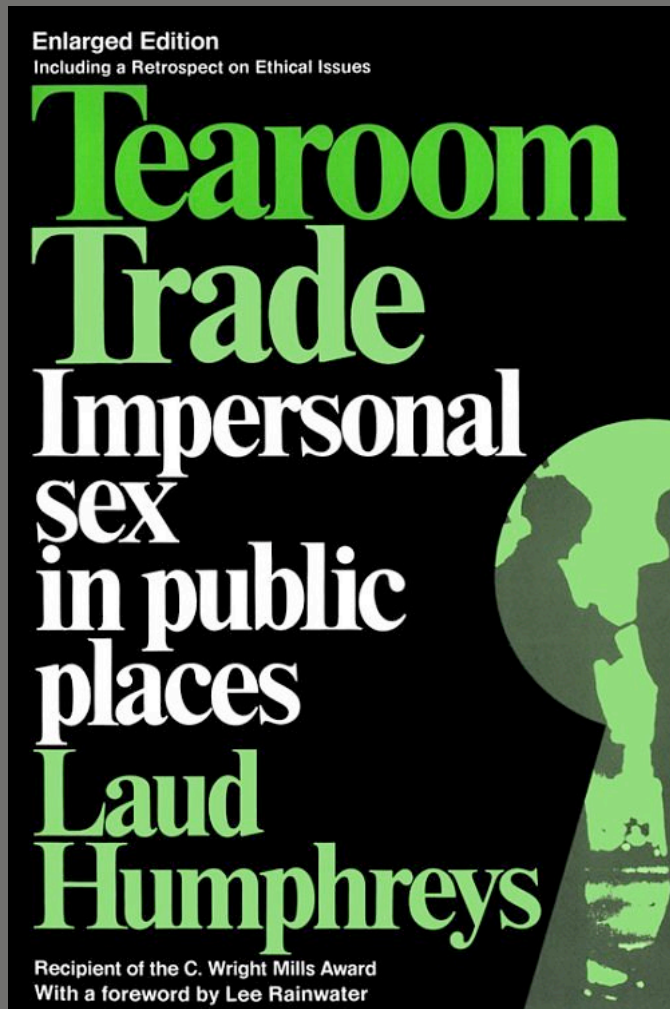
New and Expanded Edition

**James H. Jones**

Now required by Federal law after the infamous Tuskegee Study of syphilis by U.S. Health Department.

Note: **social scientists were not originally included in the Human Subjects Review Law, but were thrown in at the last moment for the sake of "equality."**

<http://www.dc.peachnet.edu/~shale/humanities/composition/assignments/experiment/tuskegee.html>



# Classic Ethical Problem #1:

Laud Humphreys's  
Early and  
Controversial  
Study of Gay Men

# Obedience to Authority

**Stanley Milgram**

HARPER TORCHBOOKS  TB 1983

Classic Ethical  
Problem #2:

Stanley  
Milgram's  
Electric Shock  
Experiments  
(1963-1965) at  
UC- Berkeley.

# Classic Ethical Problem #3:

The Philip Zimbardo Prison Experiment (1971) at Stanford.



Details: Go to Zimbardo's web site and click on Prison Experiment <http://www.zimbardo.com/flash.html>

# Professional Codes

- **Merton (1970): priority vs. originality**
- **Plagiarism**
- **Bias:**
  - Personal
  - Political
  - Financial

# Professional Codes

- **Data tweaking**
- **Backwards reasoning (writing up a theory part, making a claim, testing data, finding that the data does NOT support the initial idea, going back and re-writing the theory part to fit the findings) → NOT A GOOD IDEA!**

Only *you* are to make the final  
call on your personal and  
professional ethics!

Rules and review boards do not  
make ethical people.