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My research
- Reproductive health, education, gender in low-income countries
- Nepal, Uganda, India, Nicaragua, Kenya, Jordan, Malawi, South Africa
- RCTs, primary data collection

Aside: is *that* Economics?
Increase in empirical studies in Economics
Increase in impact evaluations

Figure 1. Growth in J-PAL and World Bank Impact Evaluations

Collecting my own data...

- Ask new questions
- Learn about behavior in the process...
  - Translations
  - Interventions
  - Personal relationships
  - Field work
  - Survey staff
  - Surprises
• Gathering data in a manner that:

  • Satisfies in-country legal and ethical requirements
  • Satisfies the University’s Research Ethics Policy

• How to do this?
Challenges in Ethical Review
IRB lack of ‘local knowledge’(?)

• IRBs far removed geographically, socially, economically & culturally

• Over or under-concern about risks
  • Worry about ‘worst-case scenarios’ that may be unlikely or unrealistic
  • Difficulty knowing what can ‘go wrong’

• Menstrual cups in Nepal

• Interviewing wives in Malawi
Differing notions of autonomy
  - In many societies, individual identity involves the kinship group, husband, father or chief support a decision
  - In many communities in Africa, first contact must be tribal chiefs or community leaders

Impact on privacy?
Pressure to participate?
Recruitment & tracking: “being helpful”
Consent

• Permission?
  • Signature of husband before wife can participate?
  • Signature of father before daughter can participate?

• Privacy?

“You may wish to consider your husband’s response regarding your participation in the study. If you think he may be uncomfortable with your participation, you may wish to talk with him about it before agreeing.”
• Long and complex consent forms can confuse rather than inform
• How to record?
  • Illiterate populations
  • Unwilling to sign
Full understanding?

- Interventions, tablets, encryption, etc.
- Commitment savings accounts (Malawi)
(Anticipated ?) unintended consequences

- Incentives for HIV negative

[Graphs showing data for Women and Men with categories Any Vaginal Sex, Days Vaginal Sex, Used Condom, Safe/No Sex, indicating differences and trends.]
• Text messages for birth control

Markets

Google Mobile Sex Advice Boosted Cheating in Uganda

Makiko Kitamura
June 5, 2013, 6:01 PM CDT
(Anticipated ?) unintended consequences

- Obtaining a driver’s license: an experimental approach to studying corruption
  - Bonus to obtain a license quickly
  - Free driving lesson
  - Control
- Bonus group members don’t know how to drive
Uncertainty and adverse events

- To know in advance the exact circumstances of research is hard, if not impossible
- Increased distance, magnitude, unforeseeability and difficulties entailed in responding
- A PI can arrive abroad, and realize that the situation is much different than he or she anticipated
- IRBs may vary in anticipating and considering these exigencies

- Lightening?
- Vampires, Illuminati?
What is sensitive?

- Sexual behavior? (Malawi)
- Income? (South Africa)
What is sensitive?

- Ethnicity? (Rwanda)
- Politics?
Collision or cooperation? Foreign and US IRBs

Who reviews?

Who reviews first?

What is the standard?

Who knows best?

Quality of IRBs vary enormously: may agree or disagree

Malawi circumcision study
Conflicts of Interest

“Circumstances that create a risk that professional judgments or actions regarding a primary interest will be unduly influenced by a secondary interest”

- Financial
- Expectations of advancement
- Pressures from administration
- Political
- Personal competition/conflict
Multiple actors
- Researchers
- IRBs
- Graduate students
- Partners
- Survey company

NSO, Consulting, IRB$
Conflicts of Interest

• Who provides information?

• What information is provided?

• Minibus study

• Sampling frame
• Rely on PI reporting
  → What gets reported to the IRB?
  → Medial vs. non-medical IRB?

• Rely on students, field staff
  → What gets reported to the PI?
Daily challenges
Incentives to report?
Overcoming (?) challenges

- Team
- Trust
- Monitor
- Support
Overcoming (?) challenges

Actors
Outcomes
Implications

Culture
broader picture
Pilot & adjust

Language
Interpersonal etiquette
Local norms & rules
Tacit ways of doing things
Thank you!