Turning class activities into research

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What began as an idea for an undergraduate social psychology class activity, intended to increase understanding of social influence, became a replication of an early social psychology study …
... and inadvertently offered a chance to turn teaching into research and two publications

- Stanley Milgram
- 1960 in Boston, MA
- Researching social attitudes
- “lost” pre-addressed and stamped letters
- Waited to see how many of each condition would be “helped” on their way

TWO CONDITIONS:
- Medical Research Associates
- Friends of the Nazi Party
The students started by working together to decide on a modern equivalent to “the friends of the Nazi Party”

- 2011 = The Anti-All Blacks Association
- 2010 = The Whale Meat Wholesalers
- 2009 = The Pedophile Network

**Other changes to Milgram’s original study included:**

Adding a third “positive” condition: *The Random Acts of Kindness Society*

And for the neutral condition: *John Smith*
Students were randomly divided into three groups
- Positive, Negative or Neutral addressee
- All used the same AUT Private Bag address
- All were sent out to “lose” their letters all around Auckland

In order to determine the value of the exercise on learning, students were given a short survey with Likert-type questions about their enjoyment of the activity …
- … and if their learning was enhanced through the activity

All students were also given an extra credit point for providing a stamp
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