



Values, Ethics, and Research: Commerce, Politics, Integrity, and Culture

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Normative dilemmas in research

- The dilemma of commercializing scientific inquiry
- The dilemma of the politics of knowledge production
- The dilemma of success and integrity in research
- The dilemma of the culturality of knowledge

The commercialization of scientific inquiry (I)

- The crass falsification of research for economic gain remains rare, but illicit economic pressure on researchers continues to threaten the integrity of research.
- More innocuous, but problematic nonetheless: The invocation of scientific procedures for product legitimacy.
- Outside research funding risks distorting institutional research agendas.

The commercialization of scientific inquiry (II)

- The danger of compromising institutional agendas is inversely related to the institution's prestige and quality.
- An aggravating factor is growing institutional pressure on its members to secure outside funding.

The commercialization of scientific inquiry (III)

- Critical safeguards against a further erosion of ethical standards through economic pressures include
 - An adequate material base for scholarly research in higher education,
 - instituting and maintaining solid measures of quality control, and
 - transparent rules for the protection of intellectual property.

The politics of knowledge (I)

- Knowledge is being produced, disseminated, and used under intensely political conditions.
- A central dimension of the politics of knowledge is the relationship of reciprocal legitimation between knowledge and power.
- This relationship operates at the national level, but also in the international system.

The politics of knowledge (II)

- Instructive cases in point for the normative dilemmas of the politics of knowledge are
 - The relationship between research and national security in the U.S.,
 - the controversy over the teaching of evolution theory in American schools, and
 - the politicization of biological and anthropological research (e.g., the “sociobiology controversy” and the “Yanomami affair”)

Success vs. integrity in research (I)

- Growing competitive pressures for recognition in research make “shortcuts” increasingly tempting.
- Spectacular exceptions notwithstanding, existing review procedures seem to work to avoid gross misdeeds.
- Less egregious, but serious research misconduct appears to be on the rise.

Success vs. integrity in research (II)

- A non-negligible part of such misconduct is due to outside pressure.
- Another important factor are perceived injustices in the recognition of scientific work and the distribution of rewards.
- There are encouraging signs that this situation is receiving increasing attention.

Research ethics and knowledge cultures (I)

- The “culturality of knowledge” (Böhme and Scherpe) is an important dimension of the ethics of research.
- Therefore, the recognition and understanding of different knowledge cultures is an increasingly salient norm in the world of research.
- Since gender and cultural differences bear on the construction of knowledge, the universality of knowledge claims is to be handled cautiously.

Research ethics and knowledge cultures (II)

- Particularly susceptible to culturally specific frames of conceptual reference is research on issues such as
 - development
 - modernization
 - costs and benefits of technological change
 - fertility and population control
 - migration and labor markets
 - childcare and disease prevention.

Research ethics and knowledge cultures (III)

- While the pursuit of generalizeable knowledge claims remains one of the important goals of scientific inquiry, the recognition of culturally specific ways of knowing appears both prudent and just.

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A Mertonian Postscript: “The ethos of modern science” (I)

- “Universalism”
 - “the conflicting imperatives of scientific universalism and of ethnocentric particularism”
- “Communism”
 - “the status of scientific knowledge as common property”
- “Disinterestedness”
 - “the translation of the norm of disinterestedness into practice is effectively supported by the ultimate accountability of scientists to their compeers”

A Mertonian Postscript: “The ethos of modern science” (II)

- “Organized Skepticism”
 - “skepticism threatens the current distribution of power”

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