



This is a transcript of a podcast available at <http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/>

Title	<i>Who Cares About Research Integrity?</i>
Description	Seminar looking at the importance of integrity within medical research. Part of the Research Integrity Seminar Series organised by Research Services, in collaboration with the Oxford Biomedical Research Centre
Presenter(s)	Mark Sheehan
Recording	http://media.podcasts.ox.ac.uk/medsci/research_integrity/sheehan-medium-audio.mp3
Keywords	research, integrity, ethics, medicine, B990, V520, 1
Part of series	<i>Research Integrity</i>

Contributor Thanks Catherine. I should first explain; when I first talked to Catherine about giving this talk, I said, “Who cares about research integrity?” Only to discover later that that’s ambiguous between the sort of literal meaning of who cares about research integrity, which would mean an empirical study of people’s attitudes to research integrity.

But what I actually meant was the sort of non-literal more flippant view, which is who cares about – which what I was really getting at was why care about research integrity? Rather than strictly who cares. So, I hope that doesn’t mean that you’ve changed your mind about listening to what I’ve got to say and want to leave.

But what I’m interested here is generally - and it fits with a number of things I’m interested in more generally - is this question of the justification for these sorts of as it were intrusions into research. So, the overarching question is a question about the justification for the certain sorts of regulation, certain sorts of interventions, guidance, advice that we might give to researchers that intervene – mess up, as it were, to various extents, the research process.

And what I want to do in the next half hour or so is first draw a few distinctions and get clear about a couple of things. Then I’ll go into what is typically talked about – or what is often talked about – in the biomedical context under the umbrella of research integrity, namely various ways of various misconduct, kinds of misconduct. But being in the second part of the talk I’ll broaden that out a think more generally about it in a broader way about research integrity and why we might care about that. So, I hope that sounds reasonable. It’s tough if it doesn’t (Laughter).

So, the first question is to be – this business is as much stipulative as anything. This is what I’m going to mean by research integrity. And this will make sense of what I mean by talking about more narrow senses and less narrow senses.

So, one element of research integrity is a point about compliance, so I think it’s Boston has – if you go to Boston University, they have research integrity and compliance and they seem to lump all this stuff together. The idea that research integrity is about getting researchers just to do what they’re legally required to do. That sort of stuff. Getting them to comply. Making them do it, as it were. And presumably, this is involved with the law and what the regulations are and those sorts of questions.

Then this element is about research integrity and conduct, so doing the wrong thing. I’ve separated this out from ethics, which I’ll say a bit more about in a minute, partly because what I take to be

the ethics, there are going to be – what I understand to be – ethical issues to do with these set of questions, which there won't be about here. So typically we don't think that it's an ethical issue whether or not to falsify data. Right, so where the ethics is settled on that, then it's a question of misconduct whether or not you should act wrongly or not.

So, these tend to be cases where we on the face of it look like they're wrong by – doing the wrong thing – whereas these cases, where I call ethics, there are going to be cases where it's not clear what the right thing to do is. Not clear whether it's wrong or right. But I'll spend a bit more time talking to you about these kinds of cases in just a minute.

In terms of ethics; I mean, quite a bit of this is quite controversial I think and it's probably developing. Each of them would require its own paper. Only very quickly, I count methodology, scientific robustness, those sorts of questions as an ethical issue because – very quickly – if you're doing a bad piece of science, a piece of science that is not robustly conceived or robustly developed, then that's a waste of your time, a waste of the subject's time, a waste of money Etc. Etc. And that's unethical, right? If you think about why there's an obligation to do research or why research is permissible, it tends to rely on or rest – particularly the biomedical context – it relies on there being a usefulness of the research. And if you have bad science, bad methodology, then you undermine that justification, so you take away the grounds for doing it.

Only harms and benefits of consent are fairly straightforward. Then there's this usefulness criteria, which again I count as an ethical one. Again, there's no point doing a piece of research seems to me and exposing people to risks, costs, those sorts of things, unless there's going to be some sort of benefit. Unless there's some sort of use. And again, this depends very heavily on a sort of instrumentalist account for doing research which we'll come back to. And similarly for social value; if it doesn't make a lot of sense, it seems to me to do a piece of research in a particular location where there's no benefits that will accrue to people in that location, to that particular social community, particularly if they are absorbing the risks.

And in the final element of what I'm going to count here as research integrity, is this character thing and this is the idea of getting people to be better people. And we think about things about honesty and can we gel. And again I think in along the lines of the misconduct kinds of cases, I don't count this as ethics in a sort of these are not ethical issues in sense. They need particular governance. Because, I mean, we have a general platitude that says – and we know our way around this platitude – that says, you should be honest. You should be nice to your colleagues. You should organise research, your working environment in a way that is as least oppressive as possible. These are the sort of things – they're not specific to research it seems to me, and they're more about – the ethics here is quite obvious; the question here is whether we do it right.

There's one website I looked at yesterday that was giving guidance about research integrity to undergraduate students. And it read like, "You should be nice. You should understand the limits of your knowledge and your ability," and all sorts, and I thought, well; this in terms of the ethical issues, these strike me as they lie – this is a different set, a separable set of questions. They all fit under research integrity, but I think it's useful to separate them out.

So, now what I'm going to do in what follows is concentrate primarily on this one in my looking at specific cases, as it were, a specific example. I'm going to concentrate a little bit more on this and in particular, concentrate on conflicts of interest. Although more can be said and I'm happy to talk more about the other ones. This is in terms of getting at the range of issues that come up in the justification of steps with respect to research integrity.

And then in the second part, I want to talk more generally about the whole thing. Right? So including in particular this set of issues.

Another thing to point out about these, I mean, we are here in the hospital and so there's a tendency to thicken about the biomedical stuff. But I take it that this is also a university interest here. And so it is important to not simply focus on the biomedical case. And I think if you just focus on

the biomedical case when thinking about these issues, then the shape of it looks very different. The shape of the justification for this will look very different than if you take, for instance, into account other sorts of non-biomedical research.

A lot of stuff has been written from social science perspective complaining – rightly, I think – that the biomedical context, the biomedical model has been wheeled out and applied in cases where it shouldn't really - which isn't appropriate to apply.

A second kind of distinction that's useful here – and this is only one of them – is between two – as I say, there's two kinds of [[ought 0:08:48]] judgement – so two kinds of ethical judgements that we might make. One is between first person and second person judgements or, then perhaps an easy way to think about it is just direct and removed moral judgements.

And the thought here is, when I make a decision about what I ought to do, that's in a very particular context, with the range of options that I have available to me, and my understanding of the range of options and the reasons for doing each of them. So, that's a direct judgement. So, I'm confronted by this judgement and it's me that has to act; I then have to decide to act. Now, this is different from the judgement that you might make about the judgement that I make. So, I decide – and the original context in which I was thinking about this was in a case - that's completely not relevant to this – was the case of an abortion. Right? So, you have a woman who is 20 weeks pregnant and she's deciding whether or not to have an abortion.

She has to make a direct judgement. She's responsible for that decision, she's responsible for what she does. It's her judgement. Nobody else's judgement; her judgement. But that doesn't stop all us from having a go at saying what she should do. We can look at - and come to the best understanding of what her predicament or not. We can make a judgement about her judgement. So, if she decides to have an abortion, we can say, that was the right thing to do or that was the wrong thing to do.

Now that is a second person judgement. That's an indirect judgement that we make about another persons' moral judgement. But what's most interesting in this case and what's relevant for here, I think, is that then what follows from us making an indirect judgement about the rightness or wrongness of her judgement is we then have to make another moral judgement. A direct moral judgement about how we respond to the wrongness or rightness of her judgement. This is all getting a bit confusing.

But the important point here is that there are two different direct judgements here. There's the judgements that the person make in the particular case – the woman and her abortion – and then there's the judgement that we make on the basis of taking her to do the wrong thing – if we do – about what we should do about it. And it's important to realise that there's a lot of things that we can do in response to wrongdoing that we perceive. We can just say, "You shouldn't have done that." We can go and bad-mouth them behind their backs. Here I'm thinking about the misconduct case, think about a researcher misconduct.

So, a researcher has done something that we judge to be wrong. We now have to make a decision about what we do about that. One of the things that we can do is just tell them that they're naughty, and they shouldn't do that. One is that we can prevent them from being in the club. We can tell them that they're doing something illegal. We can arrest them, we can fine them, we can do all sorts of things. There's a whole spectrum of things that we could – the response is.

Now, what's important here is that research integrity – regulation, intervention, those sorts of things – fit in that kind of case. So, it's important to distinguish between the judgements, the mechanisms that go on for an individual in judging how they ought to act. And separating that from how we should respond when we disagree with somebody else's judgement.

It's important to distinguish the locus of choice here as well as reminding us that there's a further decision to be made, further moral decision to be made, once we're judged in these cases.

The second kind of distinction that's useful here is consequence based judgements from principle based judgements, and I'm including here character in this principle based stuff. So, the stuff we're talking about; honesty and those sorts of questions will – I can account in the principle based judgements and I can – I'm happy to justify that later. I think there is justification.

Now, what's important here is I think this distinction helps us to distinguish the kinds of considerations involved in things like the harms associated with research as well as the methodology – questions about the appropriate methodology and the usefulness of the research – from those that are involved in issues like consent, like justice, and also questions about misconduct in some cases and character. Let's notice, we can separate out those just to keep them clear.

So, what I want to focus on here; what I said at the outset is what's the appropriate response to disagreements about direct judgements? So, now we have a set of direct judgements that a scientist – that a researcher – has made and we have to decide what the appropriate way of responding or dealing with when we disagree with those decisions that they make. Or, to put it more cheekily, why and when should we meddle with science, with researchers and them doing their business?

So, the kinds of situations here is when society or institutions or indeed, professional societies, say to individual researchers that you shouldn't do this. And then go on to enforce it. They're the kinds of questions that we're – I'm thinking about here.

Now, as I said at the outset, what I mentioned to do is to first start by drilling down a bit and looking at a particular kind of case. And then we'll broaden it back out again and come back to the general question about this in – for research integrity in just a bit. And the example, as I mentioned, that I will look at, is this problem about misconduct.

And here I'm talking about things like falsification, bad research practices, all the things that were on that list; authorship questions, conflict of interest, plagiarism, duplication.

Now, what seems clear about these kinds of misconduct cases is that the harms to the public and to the patients do look to be something of a problem. So, when we're thinking about biomedical research and I'm thinking about primarily biomedical research in this case now. The harms if for instance, somebody fabricates the results of a trial, makes it up as they go along, then this may well cause harm. And there's been quite a lot of documentation, stuff written about the ways in which this might mislead research. And one response to this has been that, "Look; these things will get caught up, caught out." That people will catch up; science catches up fairly quickly.

If somebody claims to have found a cure for cancer and publishes it, it won't take long for somebody to check the results just to make sure that this is the problem.

But generally harms are a problem. These kind of harms are a problem so we do need to be careful about that. As I said, these are the sorts of things that particularly seem to lead to it; making up results, falsifying the results and cutting research corners. So, if methodology requires a particular sort of process and then you don't do that then that might undermine the quality of the research.

And as I mentioned there are these checks – there might be some checks within science – about the nature of the science and what the science requires. That might help with that, but it's not clear how long this will always take it. So, a cure for cancer might be checked quite quickly, but some other stuff might causes a lot of damage before it actually gets found out. And what I think is most important about these problems – these kinds of harms – is that it connects back to the point of the research in the first place.

Why methodology matters – you'll recall I argued why methodology matters, you'll recall – is because of the usefulness of the research, the benefits that this is going to bring. All of these things, all of this kind of misconduct, are undermine the possibility of science delivering the benefits that's justified by. Right? So, we think of science as being justified in terms of ethics, the reason we permit science or it is allowed is because of the benefits that it will bring supposedly. These sorts of things undermine that so undermine its justification. And that's why we have these problems.

So, thinking a bit more about conflicts of interest. One of the things that surprised me in looking at these cases is how – and in the stuff that’s been written about – there’s an amazing amount of stuff that’s been written about conflict of interest – which you might have figured out, staggers me. The definition of conflict of interest just strikes me as really bad, apart from anything else.

I mean, when I think about a conflict of interest, I think a conflict of interest is where two interests conflict. I have a conflict of interest; well, I have an interest that says do that, I have another interest that says do that. And this looks like it happens all the time. Completely widespread. But the definition in the literature is often actually tied to wrongdoing associated with conflict of interest. So the definition is not actually about when somebody has a conflict of interest, it’s doing wrong because of having a conflict of interest.

Having a conflict of interest on this definition – on the literature definition – seems to be about being manipulated by financial concerns when you ought not to be. That is falsifying or fabrication or cutting methodological corners because you’re impressed by the amount of money you’ll get when you do that, which seems to me an odd definition. Because it misplaces the wrongness here; I mean, what’s wrong with that scenario is the falsification of data, is the fabrication of evidence. It’s not the conflict of interest. If conflicts of interest are really widespread and all over the place, then there’s the question, well, why do we have this urge to disclose them?

So, it looks as though the requirement to disclose a conflict of interest – it doesn’t say anything about acting on the conflict. One of the things I’ve been looking for is some evidence that suggests that if people don’t disclose conflict of interest, they’re more likely to do the wrong thing. That is, other than their non-disclosure of the conflict. That is, they’re more likely to fabricate if they’re in the pocket of the pharmaceutical industry, and there isn’t a lot of evidence about that it seems. There’s a lot of evidence to suggest that where there are commercial involvements that there’s favourable commercial results, but that seems to me a different point; that’s not this point.

I mean, the overall thing to bear in mind about this I think is that we need to distinguish between the motives for why people do something and what it is that they do. So, the motives that researchers have for getting involved in a piece of research and the content of the research, so the actual research that they do. There’s a huge range of reasons and motives that people have for doing particular sorts of research. It separates out, it draws a line between those motives and those reasons and what it is that they actually do.

So somebody who was in the payment of a pharmaceutical industry – or in the pharmaceutical industry – who was doing research only because of the great big paycheque they get for doing it for the pharmaceutical industry can still do very good research. Can still do very solid, systematic, beneficial Etc. research. There’s no necessary preclusion there.

There might be other issues; if the research that they’re doing is done in such a way that’s methodologically unsound, so they’re only – they compare – I mean, one of the strategies here is that pharmaceutical industries do trials compared against placebo. Because it’s easier to get a good result against the placebo that it is against the competition. So, a good way of being able to get a result and being able to say, “Yes, well, we’ve got this fantastic pill,” is to compare it against placebo, something we know doesn’t work. Right?

The problem with that, if there is a problem – and I think there probably is – is this is a waste of time. It’s a usefulness point. The problem is that that kind of research is not very useful. It’s not that the person who published it and was paid to doing it didn’t say that he was paid to do it. The research can be criticised in a different sort of way from the conflict of interest.

Anyway, I think this is an example of the point of going into the conflict of interest cases, an example of trying to think about how we’re trying to unpack some of the ways in which we think about the problem with misconduct. The problem with the kinds of research and misconduct that we’re dealing with when we’re dealing with research integrity.

But what I'd like to do is step back one step just to think about the – to systematise a little bit the kinds of problems and the kinds of issues involved in these kinds of misconduct. And so the first is just go through the various sorts of different harms that we might think are involved here, and to have a little bit to say about each of them.

So, I've already said about the harms involved to the public and the patients. The next sort of thing that we really need to sort of [right 0:24:07] is this harm to reputations. So the reputation of science, the reputation of institutions, the reputations of journals. And I'm conscious here that the university and the trust, they all have very strong concerns that their reputation is not damaged by the activities of, as it were, rebel researchers. But I take that these sorts of reputational risks – there's two ways about it; one, worry about focusing basing our worries around misconduct solely on a reputation worry, is that can look a little self-regarding. So, the only reason I care about this - the only reason the university cares about this - is because the university is watching its back. That's one thing, which I think is something that undercuts this worry a bit. It doesn't take it away, but it undercuts it.

The other thing is that I think when we think that there's something wrong with misconduct or there's something wrong with lacking integrity and research, I think we don't just think it's a matter of reputation. I think it misses the sort of phenomenology here slightly, that we think there is something wrong with it and it's not just about the reputation of the relevant institution or journal or professional body.

And finally, the other kinds of harms and benefits involved here are the ones involved - about researchers. This is the way this point about direct judgements comes back. And it also reflects – influences what we can do about these sorts of misconducts. The reputational stuff, the financial considerations and indeed career prospects, are all things that are on the line here for the researchers as well, so not just the reputation of the institution, but of the researcher.

So, the researcher in making the decision about whether to cut corners on this piece of research has to think about these sorts of benefits as well and has to make these trade off. How much does the pharmaceutical industry money matter as compared to a viable career or something? Those sorts of things. So these are the sorts of individual decisions that we're very rarely privy to in these kinds of cases. Which I think make a difference when we're thinking about the direct judgements as opposed to the kinds of responses to the direct judgements you disagree with.

So, the second kind of case that I was looking at – the second part of that distinction – was these principle based problems. And broadly the two sorts of problems we get here are wrong intentions or motivations and then the character issues and the dishonesty. And these are the sorts of worries that we might have again about misconduct and how we might criticise and how we might – what might justify acting in a particular way with respect to misconduct. We might worry about wrong intentions or we might worry about things like dishonesty. So these might be the features that we seek to address in order to justify particular actions dealing with misconduct. We want to correct wrong intentions or change the researchers character in some sort of way.

And I think basing our responses on these sorts of things faces a number of problems; I mean, the first problem is it looks like these kinds of intentions and character issues are going to be difficult to prevent. And this is just a reference back to the predicament of the individual researcher. The individual researcher is in the position of having to decide and weigh up how much is the £10,000 from the AstraZeneca worth to me? And when they make that decision, they're going to make that decision independently of all these other sorts of things that we're considering. How they do that balancing is to a certain extent entrenched, and will be very different.

One thing we can do, of course, is skew that enough so that they're always going to choose not to be dishonest, and this is the sort of – you have a massive punishment for dishonesty or you'll lose a hand if you're dishonest. And that'll pretty much make sure that people won't be dishonest. Right? I mean, that strikes me as a legitimate strategy. It would never fly, I don't think but...

It's important also that these things are not about consequences, so we're not interested here in these wrong intentions because they have bad consequences, because we've already dealt with that, right? That's the worry about harms. If we're worried about harms then we think about it in those sorts of terms. I'm also not sure that the harm – thinking about these in consequences generalises in quite the same way as these ones do. Some kinds of cases will involved more harms than others. In these kinds of cases, in terms of the character and wrong intentions case, we have all sorts of issues about how we justify the interference, so this is referring back to that point about we want to make researchers into better people. We want researchers to be honest not dishonest, we want them to be collegial, we want them to be friendly, we want them to be nice.

What's unclear about it is why research is special. We don't make people be nice in other context; why should we make them be nice here? So there's a worry there about how these things gets justified.

I should just say a little bit about a diagnosis for the misconduct stuff and before I say, there's a little bit about the more general strategies. One of the things that I think is going on here is that we tend to be outraged by scientific misconduct in a way that seems disproportionate to other sorts of misconducts. I think what we do is that we forget the amount of politics that's involved in science, the amounts of politics involved in the practice of science. We have this idealised view about the way in which what science is. We have this idea that there's just the researcher slaving away in the pursuit of truth. But in fact, they are all exactly the sorts of political struggles and political dilemmas that come up in every other kind of practice.

So, I think in terms of dealing with these sorts of things, I think we're better off rather than trying to discourage with punitive measures, trying to undermine the sources of the politics. So, things like reputation, funding bias, pecking orders, hierarchies. Of course in this hallowed institution, we don't know anything about those. Those sort of cultural questions seem to be as much the issue here as anything else and making a difference there seems to be much more productive. But of course, that's not necessarily saying that we should ignore those harms, but as I've suggested, I think the serious harms that are involved in these misconducts are harms that undermine the point of the research. And so they're distinctive because they do that.

I was going to say something now, a little bit about how all these things go for humanities and social sciences. But I'll just skip over it – well, you've probably read that already the way as it is. The humanities and social sciences are different and they should be treated differently (Laughter). Just because I want to get on to this stuff and I don't want to keep you too long.

Back to these questions about the general – so, I want to move now from the more specific biomedical concentrated issues about misconduct to now think about the whole, the broad question. That is the broad question about research integrity ethics, how we deal with managing, governing, regulating this whole area and what justifies that whole question. Which I think underpins a lot of this. I mean, I think where we have got to to this point - I mean what this case study of thinking about misconduct and conflict of interest – that there isn't a lot of systematic justification. It's all bitsy. I mean, the most systematic we've got here is the harm stuff. That is the harms and undermine the point of research. Everything else seems a bit lose and we don't have an overarching account.

Even the harm stuff doesn't seem to be that broadly applicable particularly if we take the kinds of harms involved in the humanities research. So, we take research integrity to apply in these issues about government regulations, to apply more broadly than anything we've come up with so far.

So, the remaining question. This question is what justifies the interference by the state or society into research? I think there are versions of this that apply to these institutions within society and within the state as well. But before I actually try to come up with an answer to this, I think it's important to think about why it is that there's a presupposition that we shouldn't interfere. So far I've been acting as though that's all clear. That it's clear that if we don't have a justification for

interfering and meddling in research then we oughtn't to. But what we don't have is any account of why it is that we ought not to interfere. Yes.

And I take it at the basis that this is the Libertarian style of view that this is the idea that what the state is for, and what society is for – what it does – is it protects individuals from other individuals. More specifically than that, it protects individuals from restricting the liberty of other individuals. So, the key value here is that each individual has the liberty right – the right to determine and construct their lives, the way their lives go in the way that they see fit. And the only justification by anybody else for doing anything interfering with that person will be if the exercise of that person's activity infringes on the liberties of others. Alright? This is a sort of standard Libertarian view. So, liberty is the preeminent value and the only time we're allowed to interfere is when my exercise and my liberty interferes with somebody else's liberty.

On this kind of view, the idea is a very confrontational view, and the idea is the focus is on protection from interference, so what we want to do is make sure that the researcher in this case – individuals more generally – are protected from interference by the state and from any other restrictions on their liberty. And this is most often found in the context of threats to individual liberty. So, when we get the defence of misconduct and the defence of research misconduct or we think about why it is we should have any sort of ethics involvement – ethics governance, why this research should be regulated – often the response is put in terms of the right to research. That researchers have the right to do the research and if they don't, it's an infringement of their right, if we get in the way of that, if we restrict our liberty. And this is very much a Libertarian style of view.

One of the ways in which this right to research has been [[cached 0:37:00]] out is in terms of freedom of speech, so the thought is that research is another form of expression. Just so we protect freedom of speech, you should respect that. Another alternative is in terms of privacy. We think we have a right to privacy. The way I do the research in my own home is my (Laughter)... There's a privacy right and we think that, look, this research is restricted. It's protected in these sorts of ways. So that is the sort of underlying view that we need to respond to. If we're going to come up with an answer for why there should be some sort of governance in place. We need to respond to this idea of the right to research.

So, one response to this view is a sort of resources based account. And this is the place to look; public society based research, so they have a site. Research is accountable because, "we're letting you do this, sonny. We're the one stumping up the cash so you need to let us have a look at what you're doing." The worry about this is – there's a couple of worries about this view I think – first of all, it's not always the case that public and society pays for the research. Or even sponsors the research. But I take it that we think that the research integrity issues apply across that as well?

When society does pay, it's not clear that society pays for specific pieces of research. What they pay for presumably is a whole package of research, which is then – there are then bodies appointed to make decisions about which particular pieces of research – so I guess it's devolved. So there's a connection.

The way in which I often have thought about this is in terms of, people object to, as it were, 'my' taxes going towards building a new hospital. And the thought is, how do you know your taxes are actually going to that? Maybe they're going to build the road instead. So peoples' idea that anything that the taxes have paid for is something they're paying for, whereas it might actually be one step removed. So they're funding a programme of research, which has a whole process of system involving which piece of research should be paid for.

A lot of the context in which this has come up, I should say, is in the context of stem cell research in the US, thinking about the right to research. And the responses there, it looks like even where the state in this case – even when the state is not paying for the research – if we have worries about stem cell research, it might be that we have them irrespective of this accountability point.

The second sort of thing we might say in response to the Libertarian view is, “No, no, no. You’ve got the state all wrong. The state actually has an obligation to protect the public and promote the public’s welfare.” So, it’s important that the state sponsors research that will make peoples lives better. And it’s also important that the sorts of research that goes on is not a waste of money, it’s not a waste of resources and it doesn’t expose them to any particular sorts of harm.

Of course, then, the problem is that it might not actually turn out that way. So, we might think that the best way to avoid harm and promote welfare is to let researchers get on with their job and to not be interfering with them. Right? So, this is the John Stuart Mill idea; by allowing people to do all sorts of research, we have a society that’s better off than if we are very closely restrictive of what’s allowed and what’s permitted. So, have a heavy set of governance regulations might actually curtail the benefits and avoidance of harms than we expect.

So, I don’t think wither of these particularly does the job. Partly because there are exceptions, partly because they’re not so generalisable and partly because there are genuine questions about their effectiveness. And so one sort of way that I’ve been thinking about along with Mikey, a colleague at [[Ethox 0:48:07]], we’ve been working a bit on this, is thinking of research as a constitutive of social life and one of the ways of thinking about this is that – partly inspired this view, is that this idea that, look; enquiry, generally. If you think about very generally enquiry as opposed to more specific research, enquiry seems to be really important for the democratic process. So, democracy looks like one of those places where it doesn’t really function unless people are free to enquire about the different parties, enquire about their society, enquire about the ways in which their society will function, in order to inform the way in which the vote. They way in which they participate in the process.

So, sort of generalising slightly from that, we might thin, look; research as an institutionalised form of enquiry feeds into this question about participation, feeds into this questions about how – what the social role of research is and the ways in which the democratic society gets enhance by allowing and by encouraging this sort of research.

So, the initial thought is understanding enquiry and research as a democratic requirement, a requirement constitutive of the process. I mean, I think that in the end doesn’t quite work because the worry is what about non-democratic societies? Presumably we still think that research is important there? Presumably, before we had a democratic society research was important and important in the same sorts of ways as we take it to be important today.

So, the final – well, not the final but the latest version – of this is that research and systematic enquiry generally informs and constructs both the individual and the society and so this is what we mean by it’s part of a constitutive part of human and social life. The thought is there’s a deeper understanding about the point of human life and what counts as leading a flourishing life in the flourishing society that requires science. That requires research, generally. That requires this sort of enquiry. And so I take it that this is a deeper rejection of the Libertarian view that says, “No, no, science is about keeping people apart.” Fundamentally, I think that the idea – what’s an issue here between the Libertarian view and this view is whether or not society is about a collaborative effort, a collaborative enterprise, or whether or not it’s primarily an individual effort, and society managed the individual within it.

A couple of very quick concluding remarks; I don’t think this settles the question that we’re thinking about. What kinds of governance, what kinds of interference are justified in the name of research integrity or in the name of ethics or in the name of any of these sorts of problems. So it doesn’t say how we should structure this; it doesn’t say what we should do, what we should allow, how we should organise this. But what it does show is that society has a stake in the research and I think it does so in a way that’s a little less obvious, a little more substantial than just accountability for resources or the welfare kind of account.

I take it that this gives us some support for research integrity understood in this broad way, and it drowns a general concern without requiring burdensome interferences. So we can balance between concerns about the usefulness of the research, concerns about the influence of harms with the allowing researchers to carry on in a relatively free sort of way.

I'm sorry, that was a bit longer than I expected. Thank you very much.

© 2010 University of Oxford, Mark Sheehan

This transcript is released under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 2.0 UK: England & Wales Licence. It can be reused and redistributed globally provided that it is used in a non-commercial way and the work is attributed to the licensors. If a person creates a new work based on the transcript, the new work must be distributed under the same licence. Before reusing, adapting or redistributing, please read and comply with the full licence available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/uk/>