

## Ethical Responsibilities and the Dissemination of Research Results

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In its internal discussions and deliberations concerning a proposed amendment to the Ethics Framework, the Committee identified some key questions, such as the following:

- Whether articulation of this principle imposes a new ethical responsibility or makes explicit a long standing one;
- Whether the principle is one of academic freedom, of researchers' responsibilities, or both;
- Whether the principle might be used or enforced to impose inappropriate requirements on some research(ers);
- Whether the principle is disciplinary-based or shared by all disciplines.

To crystallize some of the key issues, the Committee has assembled the following sample of arguments pro and con.

### ***Con: the principle***

- outlines a new ethical obligation,
- is tantamount to a duty to publish, which is inappropriate for some research,
- is unlikely to be understood or correctly applied by REBs,
- risks infringing researchers' academic freedom, and
- is a biomedical research principle inappropriate to other kinds of research.

### ***Pro: the principle***

- is an established principle implicit within the concept of "research" (generalizable knowledge),
- is a basic principle of scientific or scholarly research,
- is integral to participants' expectation (and duty),
- is consistent with the ethics of transparency, and
- is public good.

The Committee has also sampled relevant documentation, e.g.:

### ***Council of Europe, Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, Concerning Biomedical Research, 2005***

Art. 28 Availability of results ...

3. The researcher shall take appropriate measures to make public results of research in reasonable time.

**Norway, National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, *Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Law and the Humanities*, 2001**

*3 The need for freedom of research*

It is important to safeguard research against pressures which threaten to undermine the standards of the scientific method. Research activities must therefore be free in a particular sense: they must be safe from controls which prevent the posing of problems which appear contrary to economic, political and social interests, and from the suppression of results and conclusions....

*38 Publication rights*

The interests of the researcher in publication, and the demand for the verifiability of research, indicate the publication of research results.

Both public access to and the verification of research results are reasons why these should be published...

**Canada, SSHRC, Research Data Archiving Policy**

SSHRC is committed to the principle that the various forms of research data collected with public funds belong in the public domain. Accordingly, SSHRC has adopted a policy to facilitate making data that has been collected with the help of SSHRC funds available to other researchers.

**American Sociological Association, *Code of Ethics*, 1999**

*13.04 Reporting on Research*

(a) Sociologists disseminate their research findings except where unanticipated circumstances (e.g., the health of the researcher) or proprietary agreements with employers, contractors, or clients preclude such dissemination.

**U.K. Social Research Association, *Ethical Guidelines*, 2003**

(Obligations to Society)

*1.1 Widening the scope of social research*

Social researchers should use the possibilities open to them to extend the scope of social enquiry and communicate their findings, for the benefit of the widest possible community.

*3.3 Communicating ethical principles*

A principle of all scientific work is that it should be open to scrutiny, assessment and possible validation by fellow scientist.