**Social Power, Social responsibility and science**

"What you do doesn’t matter, as long as you’re the best."

Felda Hardymon

1. Introduction

Power is fundamentally *relative* – it depends on the specific understandings, recognition of a quality in which one would motivate others to change in the way he intends. French and Raven (1) and later Feldman[[1]](#footnote-1) argue that there are six significant categories of such qualities, while not excluding other minor categories. The social power is directly related to social responsibility. Responsibility is associated equally to individuals or organizations as well as to ethics. In modern times scientific discoveries often lead to powerful applications which rapidly affect a society which is ill-prepared for them. Science enables us to recognize facts which have existed long before we become aware of them or can take responsibility for their implications. The practical uses to which scientific discoveries may be put are full of risks and uncertainties. Scientists are often perceived as having a special power and authority. Thus, one of the most important power today is science and technology. Long-term effects of science discoveries and their social power cannot accurately be foreseen, or foreseen at all.

1. Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is an idea that has been of concern to mankind for many years (2). Over the last few decades it has become of increasing importance to the business world, named corporate social responsibility. This has resulted in growing interaction between governments, businesses and society as a whole.

The social power of social responsibility relays on ethics which suggests that an [organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization) or [individual](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individual), has an obligation to act for the benefit of society such to maintain a balance between the economy and the ecosystem. The classical view states that an organization’s only social responsibility is to maximize profits (3). On the other side, there is the socioeconomic view which states that an organization’s first responsibility is to maintain and improve the environment in which it conducts its operation; the second is to maximize profits.

Power of the social responsibility can be argued by the need for: Public expectations, Long-run profits, Ethical obligation, Public image, Better environment, Discouragement of further government regulation, Balance of responsibility and power, Shareholder interests, Possession of resources, and Superiority of prevention over cures. At the same time one can argue against the social responsibility because of the following: Violation of profit maximization, Dilution of purpose, Costs, Too much power, Lack of skills, Lack of accountability, Lack of broad public support.

Social responsibility requires business to recognize what is right or wrong in their work and thus to seek fundamental ethical truths. Thus, responsibility has been identified in many professions, such as, for example, embodied in the Paramountcy principle (4), and the fundamental and primary ethical principles of engineering (professional engineer’s code of ethics NSPE 2003). This is in particularly important since their activities have effects on the safety, health or welfare of the society. Such, social responsibilities of researchers arise from the fact that it is carried out in the name of society as an expression and reflection of the society's needs, interests, priorities and expected impacts. The social responsibilities of researchers, often, extend beyond upholding the ethical standards of society. The Uppsala Code of Ethics for Scientists(5) highlights the responsibility of scientists to refrain from, and speak against weapons research and other scientific research with the potential for detrimental consequences for the environment, and for present and future generations. Thus social responsibility is the first and foremost a social, and therefore institutional, issue and power.

* 1. Corporate social responsibility

Companies have a policy of social responsibility known as corporate social responsibility (CSR), by which. they agree to follow their businesses such to benefit the community at large. Thus, CSR is a **vital element** for business corporations. The most of focus in corporate social responsibility is with regard to the environment. Other areas that should be considered in the development of corporate social responsibility programs are education and health. “Today, however, businesses must also reflect on the legal, ethical, moral and social consequences of their decisions” (21)**.**

There are several factors which explain the growing interest in corporate social responsibility. The first factor is the new concerns and expectations of citizens, consumers, public authorities in the process of globalization and industrial change. The another factor is the increasing influence of social criteria on the investment decisions of individuals and institutions, as investors or consumers. Furthermore there is the growing concern about environmental degradation.

It has always been a contradiction between business ethics and social responsibility. Companies are often engaged in acts that cannot be called ethical. Sometimes what is good for the society is not good for the business, and vice versa. If the society is conscious and ethical then businesses are forced to behave responsibly.

The CSR in the United States has been defined much more in terms of a philanthropic model, while in the European model it is much more focused on operating the core business in a socially responsible way.

1. Social Power and Research Ethics: What is Ethics in Research & Why is it Important?

Social responsibility and responsible research conduct should be two essential sides of ethical science and therefore social power. The great task of our times is to keep society from being shaken to pieces by the progress of science and technology. Science crosses new borders, and thereby calls fundamental ethical views into question (6).Scientific research has become more competitive and more politically controlled in recent years. This has been a source of frustration for many researchers, who believe that research has become short-sighted. Much of the emphasis in science is on the professional responsibility regarding how research should be conducted. This focuses on the tension between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ uses of scientific concepts, theories and methods what is called "internal." Scientists also have "external" social responsibilities toward the larger community. In some situations in research, people disagree about the proper action for research what is known as[ethical or moral dilemmas](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-dilemmas/). Independence in research would, as argued by Merton (7), diminish external control and hence the distortion of scientific results. Thus, it is important to adhere to ethical norms in research. Research ethics involves the application of fundamental [ethical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethical) principles where ethics is usually understood as rules for distinguishing between right and wrong. Their norms are so ubiquitous that one might regard them as simple common sense, while others might consider them as social power more informal than laws.

Ethical considerations have traditionally been excluded from scientific discussions. This tradition might be due intention of the scientific community to avoid controversies which, for example, divided Europe following the Reformation. The most researchers are aware of their social responsibilities, but they disagree on how much politics should interfere with their work. In the contemporary world, it became accepted practice that **novel** research program should include an ELSA component (Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects of Science).

Ethics in science has increasingly become an important issue of Social Power. However, the real problem arises from the way the scientific results are used, therefore it is not only scientists that should be concerned with ethical, legal and social aspects of science, but everybody taking decisions. There are two different ideologies when it comes to research and public utility in the scientific community:

* An ideology of internal control – researchers are to judge about the public utility of their research. To make important discoveries, research must be motivated by curiosity.
* An ideology of external control – social actors, such as politicians and organizations determine what research should be done and how. It might become very fashion-driven especially concerning funding of research. The example might be treatment of climate change, nanotechnology, and synthetic biology.

Scientists and engineers take privileges of positive achievements in science and technology. They should, also, be, at least, morally responsible for the negative consequences which result from various applications of their work. Certainly, fragmentation, ignorance and diffusion of responsibility are the reasons why scientists and engineers should not be blamed for all the evils created by their work. In particular the excuse of ignorance is acceptable for scientists involved in basic and fundamental research, while it is much weaker for those involved in applied scientific research and innovation (8).

The social responsibility of scientists is closely related to their scientific competences and technological abilities. Rotblat, with Atiyah wrote(9):

• Scientists will understand the technical problems better than the average politician or citizen, and knowledge brings responsibility and power.

• Scientists have knowledge and they are responsible for how this knowledge is properly used.

The pattern of good scientific behavior, as the bases of social power, is reflected in Merton’s ethos of science(10). They suggested that good scientific practice includes the sharing of scientific results with others, whereby everyone, in principle, is able to test, challenge and use scientific results, known under the acronym CUDOS (universalism, communism, disinterestedness, organized sceptism).

It is debated whether the politicians should apply a code of ethics, or whether it is a profession entirely discretionary (11). Many professional associations, government agencies, and universities have imposed ethical codes, rules, and policies related to research ethics. The following is a rough and general summary of some professional ethical principles, which include: Honesty, Objectivity, Integrity, Carefulness, Openness, Respect for Intellectual Property, Confidentiality, Responsible Publication, Responsible Mentoring, Respect toward colleagues and treating them fairly, Social Responsibility, Non-Discrimination, Competence, Legality, Animal Care, Human Subjects Protection (12).

Ethical codes are often adopted by management, not to promote a particular moral theory, but as necessities for running an organization in a complex environment. It is interested how CFP Board adopted only 7 principles to establish the highest principles and standards: **Integrity, Objectivity, Competence, Fairness, Confidentiality, Professionalism, and Diligence** (13).

Behind the ethical codes there are a code of practice (code of [professional responsibility](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional_responsibility)) which are usually adopted by a profession or by a governmental or non-governmental organization to regulate that profession. Listed below are a few examples of professional codes (Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), and Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)).

* Minimize Harm (Honesty);
* Proper Conduct (Patience);
* Show Loyalty (Faithfulness);
* Act Independently (Courage);
* Act Independently (Independency).

Many international treaties, agreements, declarations, and judgements intend to regulate the ethical process of scientific research and development[[2]](#footnote-2) such influencing social power. For example, in his book *Hope in a Dark Time: Reflections on Humanity’s Future*, David Krieger has collected a number of declarations and statements that treat different aspects of ethical dilemmas that have emerged from the techno-scientific development. The declarations and statements included in Krieger’s book are the following (13):

• Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted by United Nations General Assembly, 1948).

• The Declaration of a Global Ethics (discussed at the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Chicago, 1993) (14).

• The Earth Charter (formally launched in 1991).

• The Russell-Einstein Manifesto (the moral foundation of the Pugwash conferences).

• Appeal to End the Nuclear Weapons Threat to Humanity and All Life (the appeal has been signed by many leaders and Nobel laureates).

One could add to the list the Groningen Manifesto (15) and the Charter of Human Responsibilities (16).

The human condition has changed dramatically with the growing importance of techno-science in modern societies. These changed conditions give rise to a new ethics – an ethics for the technological age. A new imperative emerged which **promote the** [aims of research](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/strategicplan/index.cfm), such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error (prohibitions against [fabricating](https://ori.hhs.gov/federal-research-misconduct-policy), falsifying,..), while, at the same time, involves cooperation ethical standards which promote the **values that are essential to collaborative work** (trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness).

The ethics and morals might be seen the same to many. But, morals define personal character, while ethics stress a social system in which those morals are applied. In other words, ethics treats standards or codes of behavior expected by the group to which the individual belongs. Thus ethics, as a part of social power, can be differently defined for different groups. Such s

[cientists working at universities are guided by the ethos of academic science. The Danish philosopher Hans Fink has formulated ‘the ethos of the university’ (17). It consists of five principles:](https://www.cfp.net/for-cfp-professionals/professional-standards-enforcement/standards- The ethos of science Writings on scientific ethics sometimes focus on good scientific behaviour and set up norms and  rules  which  should  be  followed  by  members  of  the  scientific  community  in  order  to guarantee  the  credibility  and  truthfulness  of  scientific  results  or  to  discuss  cases  where established  epistemic  rules  or  norms  are  violated  [12].  The  archetype  of  good  scientific behaviour is reflected in Merton's ethos of science  whichsuggested  that  good  scientific  practice  includes  the  sharing  of scientific results with others, whereby everyone, whether an expert or a layperson, in principle, is  able  to  test,  challenge  and  use  scientific  results., known under the acronym CUDOS [13]. (universalism, communiism, disinteresstedness , organized sceptism)  Science  is  'universal'.  The  scientific  communities  were  warned  by  Merton  not  to  let their research projects be financed by power structures with special interests in the outcome of the  scientific  projects.  Independence  would,  argued  Merton,  diminish  external  control  and hence the distortion of scientific results. The peer review system gives scientific knowledge its reliability and validity. Scientists working at universities are guided by the ethos of  academic science. The  Danish  philosopher  Hans  Fink  has  formulated   'the ethos of the university' [25]. It consists of five principles: • Close connection between research and university education • Freedom of research. • Freedom of teaching • Self-governance • The unity of science  Finks's ethos of the university especially emphasises the CUDOS norm of disinterestedness and the principle of self-governance addresses the quality aspect of scientific knowledge.  When confronted with contradictions between the ethos of academic science and existing academic institutions, scientists have an academic responsibility to act according to the ethos of  science,  instead  of  according  to  the  practises  of  the  existing  institutions  University scientists should not always be guided by the ethos of science.   )

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[Another mechanism that might help prevent unintentional consequences is to encourage science and technology to establish early warning committees(18) such as specific institution of social power. Since scientists are best placed and have competence, they should practice early warning such to alert society to the possibly consequences of their work. It was 53rd Pugwash Conference[[3]](#footnote-3) that recommended that early warning and preventive action on emerging technologies should be established. Good example is Jo Rotblat who in his Nobel lecture said:”](https://www.cfp.net/for-cfp-professionals/professional-standards-enforcement/standards- The ethos of science Writings on scientific ethics sometimes focus on good scientific behaviour and set up norms and  rules  which  should  be  followed  by  members  of  the  scientific  community  in  order  to guarantee  the  credibility  and  truthfulness  of  scientific  results  or  to  discuss  cases  where established  epistemic  rules  or  norms  are  violated  [12].  The  archetype  of  good  scientific behaviour is reflected in Merton's ethos of science  whichsuggested  that  good  scientific  practice  includes  the  sharing  of scientific results with others, whereby everyone, whether an expert or a layperson, in principle, is  able  to  test,  challenge  and  use  scientific  results., known under the acronym CUDOS [13]. (universalism, communiism, disinteresstedness , organized sceptism)  Science  is  'universal'.  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The life of Albert Einstein provides an illustration of scientific whistleblowing: duty of alert (his four letters to Roosevelt, from 1939 to 1945), continuing responsibility (his last signature was for the Russell-Einstein manifesto, which thus acquired the symbolic value of a testament). Encouraged by the example of Einstein (and his readings of Albert Schweitzer, Leo Szilard, Linus Pauling, Niels Bohr), Andrei Sakharov has given a model of personal moral revaluation, unique in its amplitude and subsequent worldwide impact; in his words: Every true scientist should undoubtedly](https://www.cfp.net/for-cfp-professionals/professional-standards-enforcement/standards- The ethos of science Writings on scientific ethics sometimes focus on good scientific behaviour and set up norms and  rules  which  should  be  followed  by  members  of  the  scientific  community  in  order  to guarantee  the  credibility  and  truthfulness  of  scientific  results  or  to  discuss  cases  where established  epistemic  rules  or  norms  are  violated  [12].  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3.1 Education as means to control Social Power

The science education is an important part of researcher’s social responsibility and therefore should be important part of social power. Most academic institutions require undergraduate, graduate, or postgraduate students to have some education in the [responsible conduct of research,](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22836835) while other have, also, developed [curricula in research ethics](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23555198) where they learn about responsible research conduct and other ethical concerns. Educational programs in science ethics in Europe and the US approach the topic from different directions. Both are needed for an adequate treatment.

Presently, the focus of US ethics education in science and engineering tends to be on the individual and the responsible conduct of research (19), or microethics, what has been criticized because it is insufficient since it does not adequately recognize the larger societal context of which research is a part. In Europe, ethics education in science and engineering is grounded firmly on the macroethical approach, the concept of social responsibilities of scientists and engineers (19). European institutions of higher education has adopted an overarching educational framework that highlights social responsibility (20). That includes (EHEA) the expectation that allgraduates "have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues" (at the bachelor's level) and "have the ability to integrate knowledge... and formulate judgments ... that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments" (at the master's level), and "communicate with their peers ... and society in general about their areas of expertise" (at the doctoral level). Many would like to see more core ideas integrated into graduate education, with their mission in a social power, while scientists should appreciate the global dimension of science.

The coverage of science in the media has a major role in shaping the public's perception of science and its social power. Although most scientists are reluctant to talk to the media, there is agreement that scientists contributed significantly that science is effectively reported in media. Media reports on science have a effect as well, in helping shape the priority that school and legislatures assign to science education. Scientists obviously have the responsibility for helping the public to understand scientific issues and therefore their power. This can be done in many ways, but all require that scientists communicate in clear, understandable ways, working with journalists such to educate public so that they can appreciate the significance and power of the scientific enterprise.

3.2 Misconduct and the Responsible Conduct of Research

The social responsibilities of researchers and their social power extend beyond the ethical standards of society. Although most scientists are highly ethical, misconduct occurs because of various institutional pressures, incentives, and constraints which encourage commitment of misconduct(12). Misconduct most often results from environmental and individual reasons. The examples of research misconduct have been: fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, sexual harassment of graduate students. The misconduct represents a significant threat to the research enterprise since it could undermine public trust as well as confidence in the research process within the community (US National Academy of Sciences 1992). The misconduct often might lead to misuse of social power.

1. Conclusion

Social power of scientists has become very important and it is credited to the skill, knowledge, information or fame that it possesses in a desirable area of expertise. Scientists hold a responsibility to produce credible, transparent scientific knowledge that should not be under pressure of external interests. In producing scientific knowledge scientists are required to follow Merton’s ethos of science. Scientists need to practice the limits of the ethos of science, such that they only apply them in the context of justification. While practicing social power the various ethical responsibilities are not exclusively, and primarily, moral dilemmas for scientists. Certainly, scientists need to be adequately equipped, through education, training and institutional support, to cope with their responsibilities, and social power.

In case when the techno-scientific advancement influences the environment, human health and social settings, it should be governed by social responsibility mechanisms; thus, techno-scientists are required to follow ethical principles recognizing their social responsibility. Practicing this it might happen that in some situations existing ethical codes, treaties, agreements and conventions may not be sufficient, so that new ones may be required for handling the modern techno-scientific development in order to provide adequate social power.

Scientists and engineers are asked to reflect on existing regulation mechanisms and institutions (national, regional and international laws), and require that these mechanisms and institutions satisfy ethical principles, and their effects on social power. Certainly, science has much more social power than it has been recognized.

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1. 1. Reward Power, Coercive Power, Referent Power, Legitimate Power, Expert Power and Informational Power

   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Among them the most common are: Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of nuclear weapons, Biological Weapons and Toxin Convention, Convention on Biological Diversity, Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional, Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have, Indiscriminate Effects], Convention on the Prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of antipersonnel mines and on their destruction (Mine Ban Treaty or Ottawa Convention), International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer, Stockholm Convention on persistent organic pollutants (POP s), Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies. (The Outer Space Treaty), Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (The Kyoto Protocol). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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