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Perceptions of questionable research practices in social work and other disciplines

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*See next page for additional authors*

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Perceptions of Questionable Research Practices in Social Work and Other Disciplines

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Outline

- Background on research misconduct
- Study purpose and method
- Overview of descriptive results
- Regression results
- Limitations
- Implications for reducing misconduct
Misconduct in Research

- FFP (Falsification, Fabrication, Plagiarism) from 2005 federal regs on misconduct (42 CFR 93, PHS)
- QRP (Questionable Research Practices) has evolved since then to describe the rest, generally less serious actions
- Fanelli (2009)* meta-analysis found 2% of scientists have admitted to FFP; 34% for QRP
- IRB/Human Subjects - only one component of Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)

* Reference List on final slides
Research on Research Misconduct

- Misconduct *higher* with:
  - Certain personality characteristics (e.g., arrogance, exploitativeness, cynicism) (1)
  - Interpersonal conflict (1)
  - Early career stage (2,7)
  - Perceptions of organizational injustice (2),
  - Funding expectations and perceived competition (5, 6)
  - Country/culture of author (e.g., publications rewarded with cash, less peer criticism, less regulatory structure) (7)

- Misconduct *lower* with occupational engagement (1)

- Mixed results on gender (2,7; women lower sometimes)

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7 Fanelli D., Costas R., & Larivière V. (2015).

*SEE REFERENCES* for full citations.
Research on Research Misconduct - SW

- SW literature on non-human subjects related research misconduct is limited
  - Gibelman and Gelman calling for attention to research integrity (1)
  - Survey of SW researcher attitudes about authorship credit (2)
  - Articles on Plagiarism by students (e.g., 3)
- National Statement on Research Integrity in Social Work (4) - developed from 2006 symposium at the annual meeting; 8 areas, which parallel guidelines from Office of Research Integrity
  - Human Subjects
  - Mentoring
  - Conflicts of Interest
  - Collaborative Science
  - Data Acquisition, Management, Analysis
  - Authorship
  - Peer Review
  - Research Misconduct

1 Gibelman (2002); Gibelman & Gelman (2001; 2005).
2 Apgar & Congress (2005)
3 Collins & Amodeo (2005)
4 CSWE (2007)
Research in Social Work

- Research among Social Workers is increasing
  - Tenure expectations
  - Commitment to enhance empirical knowledge base (practice-based research and evidence-based practice)
  - Shift from process of education for practice to ensuring achievement of specific outcomes (CSWE EPAS)
- Social Workers are less familiar with and are less participatory in the IRB process
- Community-based participatory research does not necessarily fit the regulatory definition of research
  - Generalizability not as emphasized
  - Projects emphasize social action, which blurs the lines between research, community organizing and advocacy

Ethics in Social Work

- Parallel between SW practice ethics and research ethics (1, 2, 4)
- NASW Code of Ethics (3)
  - Guides practice, as well as research
  - Dignity and Worth of Person, Service, and Social Justice
  - Consistent with the Belmont Report’s core principles

The NASW Code of Ethics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belmont Report Principles and Guidelines</th>
<th>Value (NASW Code of Ethics)</th>
<th>Ethical Principle (NASW Code of Ethics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beneficence</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Social workers elevate service to others above self-interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social workers’ primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Social Justice</td>
<td>Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social workers challenge social injustice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for Persons</td>
<td>Dignity and Worth of the Person</td>
<td>Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current Study

PURPOSE:

- Examine the relative influence of moral considerations (Rest, 1984 components of moral decision-making; 1) and cost/benefit analysis for engaging in varying types of misbehaviors (rational choice theory; 2, 3)
- Across fields, and across types of institutions

DESIGN:

- Cross-sectional mixed methods (mailed, online) survey
  - 107 institutions (R1s/research and Masters/comprehensives)
  - 4,556 faculty - Social Work, Psychology, Sociology/Crim, Biology
  - Response rates - overall 39%
  - n=1,735 (53% from R1s)

1 Rest (1984)
2 Lahno (1997)
3 Paternoster & Simpson (1996) and Tibbetts (1997)
See References for full citations.
Instrument

- Responded to 6 research scenarios indicating:
  - How likely it is that they would have acted the same in the situation
  - How harmful the action was
  - How morally wrong they and their colleagues would say it is
  - Probability of being caught by colleagues, administration, or funders/publishers
  - Probability of negative sanctions, including how likely they would feel guilt/shame

- Two versions for scenarios: Biology and Social Sciences

- Other variables:
  - Organizational justice - dept/univ. procedural & distributive
  - Gender, Year of PhD, # of publications, IRB/IACUC experience
  - % of salary covered by grants and % of salary expected to be covered by grants
  - % of effort spent conducting research
Scenarios

- Adapted from Mumford, et.al. (2006) Ethical Decision-Making Measures (EDMs), for Biological Sciences and for Social Sciences
- Each scenario has a set-up paragraph - nature of research, junior or senior professor, any collaborators. Junior professor has tenure looming.
- Each scenario followed by 3 vignettes each for a total of 6 scenarios for which respondents answered questions
Scenarios - see handout

1. IRB noncompliance - add consents for younger children without IRB approval

2. Deleted data - suspicious data received from partner lab and quietly deleted

3. Reneges on authorship - tenure review looming, professor reneges on promise for students to be first authors on their work

4. IRB noncompliance/poor personnel management - RA gives identifiable datasets to another research group, PI does not inform IRB and simply reassigns student to other work

5. Misconduct suspicion/false reporting - accepts data he believes are false from senior collaborator, without challenge, tries to downplay bad data in article

6. Conflict of interest in peer review - serves as peer reviewer for article that may jeopardize his own chances for publication, by objectively criticizing its many problems
## Respondent Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field/Discipline</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
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<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soc/Crim</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<table>
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<th>Primary Position</th>
<th>$n$</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Profs</td>
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<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Profs</td>
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<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full Professors</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>Administrators</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>$n$</th>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1719</td>
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<td>Missing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1735</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived Probability of Misconduct by Scenario and Discipline

* = significant at $p < .05$, Soc more on first two, SW less on last two
Perceived Magnitude of Harm by Scenario and Discipline
Rating Scale of 1-5 (1=Minimal Harm; 5=Maximal Harm)

IRB noncompliance * Deletes suspicious data * Reneges on authorship Poor personnel mgmt * Overlooks suspicious data COI in peer review *

* = significant at p < .05, SW more on 1, 4, 6, Soc less on 2
Perceptions of Organizational Justice by Discipline

Rating Scale of 1-7 (1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree)

* = significant at $p < .05$, SW perceive less justice at dept. level

$a= .938 (1) .949 (2) .947 (3) .942 (4)$
Perceptions of Organizational Justice by Gender (all fields)

Rating Scale of 1-7 (1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree)

* = significant at p < .05, Females perceive less procedural justice on 3, 4

Note: There were no significant differences between females and males within the Social Work sample.
## Perceived Probability of Misconduct

### Standardized Co-efficients by scenario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<td>Block 1</td>
<td>Male**</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.17*</td>
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<td>Year of PhD</td>
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<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
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<td>N of IRBs, capped at 30**</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% research effort</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R2 change**</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.05*</td>
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<td>Block 2</td>
<td>R1 university</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Magnitude of harm</td>
<td>-0.17*</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Probability of shame**</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.25*</td>
<td>-0.39*</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.21*</td>
<td>-0.30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How Wrong (You &amp; Colleagues)**</td>
<td>-0.24*</td>
<td>-0.32*</td>
<td>-0.37*</td>
<td>-0.29*</td>
<td>-0.28*</td>
<td>-0.49*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Probability of detection</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R2 change**</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
<td>0.30*</td>
<td>0.51*</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.24*</td>
<td>0.69*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Block 3</td>
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<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dept Procedural</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Univ Distributive</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.27*</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.12*</td>
</tr>
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<td>Univ Procedural</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.11</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R2 change</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Block 4</td>
<td>Wrongness x External Sanctions</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R2 change</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall R2</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **p ≤ .05
- ** Significant in 3 or more scenarios in overall social science regressions
Summary of Regression Results

- As expected, moral judgment (wrongness) and anticipated guilt or shame were the strongest and most consistent predictors of the perceived likelihood of misconduct.

- Perceived likelihood of detection or external sanctions (e.g. discipline from university) had no overall effect.

- Unlike the overall social science regressions, anticipation of sanctions was not important in relation to moral judgment (no interaction).

- Distributive justice (perceived fairness of resource allocation) appear to matter in two scenarios, but effects are inconsistent.

- Type of university, position, Year of PhD, and % effort spent in research did not predict probability of misconduct.
Limitations

- Are people being honest?
  - Used anonymous survey

- Scenarios are not measuring actual behavior
  - Used scenarios to reduce social desirability and to assess situations that may have not yet happened to participants

- Are people willing to do a study like this different from those who don’t?
  - Further analysis will attempt to assess this.
Implications for Reducing or Preventing Misconduct

- Rather than compliance-oriented education (which has little research support to date in any case), focus on why integrity in research is important (e.g., why misconduct is unethical).

- Draw parallels between practice ethics and research ethics.

- Skills training or mentoring in ethical decision-making may be helpful. (See Gray & Gibbons, 2007)
Acknowledgements:

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References


References, continued

Est. marginal means from Anova results for each scenario, combined into one chart - for prob. Of misconduct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% likely</th>
<th>Psych</th>
<th>Soc</th>
<th>SW</th>
<th>seP</th>
<th>seS</th>
<th>seSW</th>
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<td>IRB noncompliance*</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11.8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<td>Reneges on authorship</td>
<td>11.1</td>
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<td>12.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor personnel mgt*</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlooks suspicious data</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COI in peer review*</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUPPORTING DATA FOR SLIDE Overall sample: Est. marginal means from Anova results for each scenario, combined into one chart - for magnitude of harm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>harm</th>
<th>Psych</th>
<th>Soc</th>
<th>SW</th>
<th>seP</th>
<th>seS</th>
<th>seSW</th>
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</thead>
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<td>IRB noncompliance*</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<td>Reneges on authorship</td>
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<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<td>Poor personnel mgt*</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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Perceptions of Sanctions, Wrongness, and Misconduct by Gender (SW only)