ADDRESSING ISSUES IN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN HEIS

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Top 10 social science questions

1. How can we induce people to look after their health?
2. How do societies create effective and resilient institutions, such as governments?
3. How can humanity increase its collective wisdom?
4. How do we reduce the ‘skill gap’ between black and white people in America?
5. How can we aggregate information possessed by individuals to make the best decisions?

(Harvard University Social Science Division, 2010)
6. How can we understand the human capacity to create and articulate knowledge?
7. Why do so many female workers still earn less than male workers?
8. How and why does the ‘social’ become ‘biological’?
9. How can we be robust against ‘black swans’ — rare events that have extreme consequences?
10. Why do social processes, in particular civil violence, either persist over time or suddenly change?

(Harvard University Social Science Division, 2010)
Agenda setting
Instrumental value of social science research
To engage or disengage
Ethics in research practice
Quality and measurement of research performance
Research agenda

**Approach**
- Top down
- Bottom up
- Free-flowing
- Consensus-building
- Strategic

**Content**
- Basic
- Applied/policy
- Cross-cutting, new
- Oriented to IT

**Rationale**
- Raise funds
- Be relevant
- Build knowledge
- Develop discipline
Utility of research

Multidisciplinary effort

Challenge to push frontiers of knowledge

Preeminence of policy research, at expense of basic research

Donor-driven research

Politicized research
Engage

Social science theory and research tools: human constructs, culturally embedded

Detach

‘Rigorous’ researcher separated from subject of research
Ethical concerns

- Ownership of field data
- Confidentiality
- Use of data
- Access to stored data
Perceptions of bibliometrics

• Metrics favor natural sciences.
• Metrics are western-oriented; privilege journals in English
• Local standards are lower than Western ones or, at worst, mediocre.
Exclusion of books

• In Social Sciences (and Humanities), books published in many local languages; English version not always available
• Social sciences more regional/local than other disciplines
• While science book publishers are few (Wiley, ACS, Elsevier), in Social Sciences (and Humanities) diversity of publishers for individual subject areas and across countries/languages, of differing quality

(Scopus)
Citation time lag

- Factors
  - Publishing process
  - Quality of manuscript
- Math has longer publication delays than Life Science
- In Social Sciences and Arts & Humanities, often more than 5 years to gather significant no. of citations

(Ling Zhang et. al., 2010)
H-index by discipline, 2009
H-index by discipline, 2009

(SCImago Journal & Country Rank)