

**Pia Vuolanto & Johanna Nurmi:
Balancing around controversial health
topics in an era emphasizing research
impact**

Our article examines researchers' possibilities to impact societal discussion while remaining neutral in relation to controversial health topics. Analyzing examples of our own research on vaccine criticism and complementary and alternative medicine, we map the challenges of research on controversial health topics through discussions on controversy researchers, researchers as experts in the media, and the societal impact of research.

First, we examine the frames through which research on controversial health topics are viewed in public discussion. Second, we analyze the expectations different publics have about social scientific research on controversial health topics. Third, we focus on the roles that media offers for researchers of controversial health topics.

From the researcher's point of view, studying controversial health topics includes many kinds of balancing acts. The objective of our article is to highlight the multiplicity of researcher roles by analyzing our own public appearances es-

pecially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through these examples, we discuss balancing impact and neutrality as researchers. We also ask what kind of risks and possibilities for research impact are generated in participating public discussion.



**Mona Mannevu & Joonatan Vir-
tanen: Impactful communication –
Researchers as science mediators in
evidence-informed policymaking**

Researchers are expected to act as science mediators assisting decision-makers in solving societal problems through evidence-informed policymaking. Yet the relationship between science and politics is complicated, and new forms of knowledge brokering require boundary work from scientists. In this article, we examine the complexities of evidence-informed policymaking for science communication. Drawing on interviews with experts in the field of strategic research, the article also sheds light on new Finnish funding instruments, such as the Strategic Research Council (SRC), and the government's analysis, assessment and research activities (VN TEAS).

To understand the specific characteristics of strategic research, we use critical theories focused on evidence-based science and the role of scientists in the policy market. The analysis shows how the trends of impactful research foster competition among researchers, especially if and when research merges with promotional culture. Our research indicates that while evidence-informed policymaking increases the value of science in society, it may also feed an attention-seeking culture of fabrication among researchers. Furthermore, the idea of an impactful scientist promotes the ideals of a performative university, such as self-promotion and endless performance measurement.



**Johanna Hokka, Elisa Kurtti & Oili-
Helena Ylijoki : Affects in the strategy
talk of university leaders and research-
ers – Conceptualizing the affective mi-
lieu of neoliberal university**

While striving to increase the social impact of research, research strategies steer academic research and simultaneously challenge the autonomy of science. In this article, we use affective-discursive

reading to analyze the meaning-making of university leaders and researchers concerning research strategies. We ask what kinds of meanings leaders and researchers attach to research strategies, and what kind of affects are intertwined with these meanings? Our data consists of interviews with rectors, vice rectors, deans and vice deans in humanities and social sciences (SSH) in three Finnish universities (n=20) and seven focus group interviews with SSH researchers (n=23). The data has been formed during the years 2020–2021.

We have recognized three affectively laden discourses in both the leaders' and the researchers' interviews. The leaders talk about strategies through 1) positivity 2) pragmatism and 3) worry. The researchers talk about the strategies as 1) pure performance, 2) as a threat and source of worry and 3) as a double-edged sword. Together these affective orientations form an affective milieu in which power and power relations strongly orient the affects and affective involvements connected to research strategies and life in today's marketized university.



Nina Kahma & Joel Lindqvist: Industrial collaborators' viewpoint to research impact

This article looks at companies' perspectives on collaborative projects with researchers, and in particular research that has been branded as “cutting-edge” research. We study projects at the intersection of academic research and company R&D with a specifically articulated goal of research having commercial impact.

We analyze the interview data of nine company representatives and ask how the interviewees view research and research impact. We apply content analysis as a tool for the analysis and mirror the results against bourdieusian theory of capitals. Moreover, we reflect company expectations against the concepts of culture fit and culture add to scrutinize the dynamics between academic research and company R&D. As a result, we see that companies are focused on the commercial and business impact of research projects and not giving much emphasis on research excellence. Academic research is seen as a resource and an opportunity to gain new insight for the company, but on the other hand companies seek to dictate the research as it is seen as an activity consuming company resources.

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