



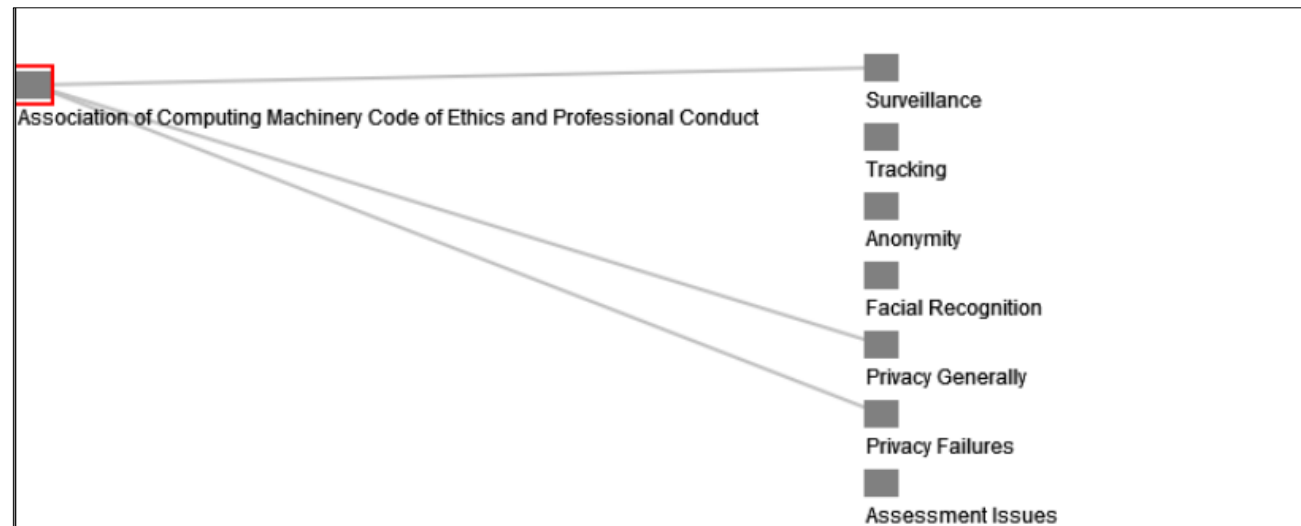
# Ethical Codes and Ethical Issues

Stephen Downes

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# Ethical Codes and Ethical Issues

In this section we examine the ethical issues being addressed by codes of conduct. Most often these are not stated explicitly, but must be inferred from the sorts of behaviours or outcomes being expressly discussed.



<https://ethics.mooc.ca/code/3>

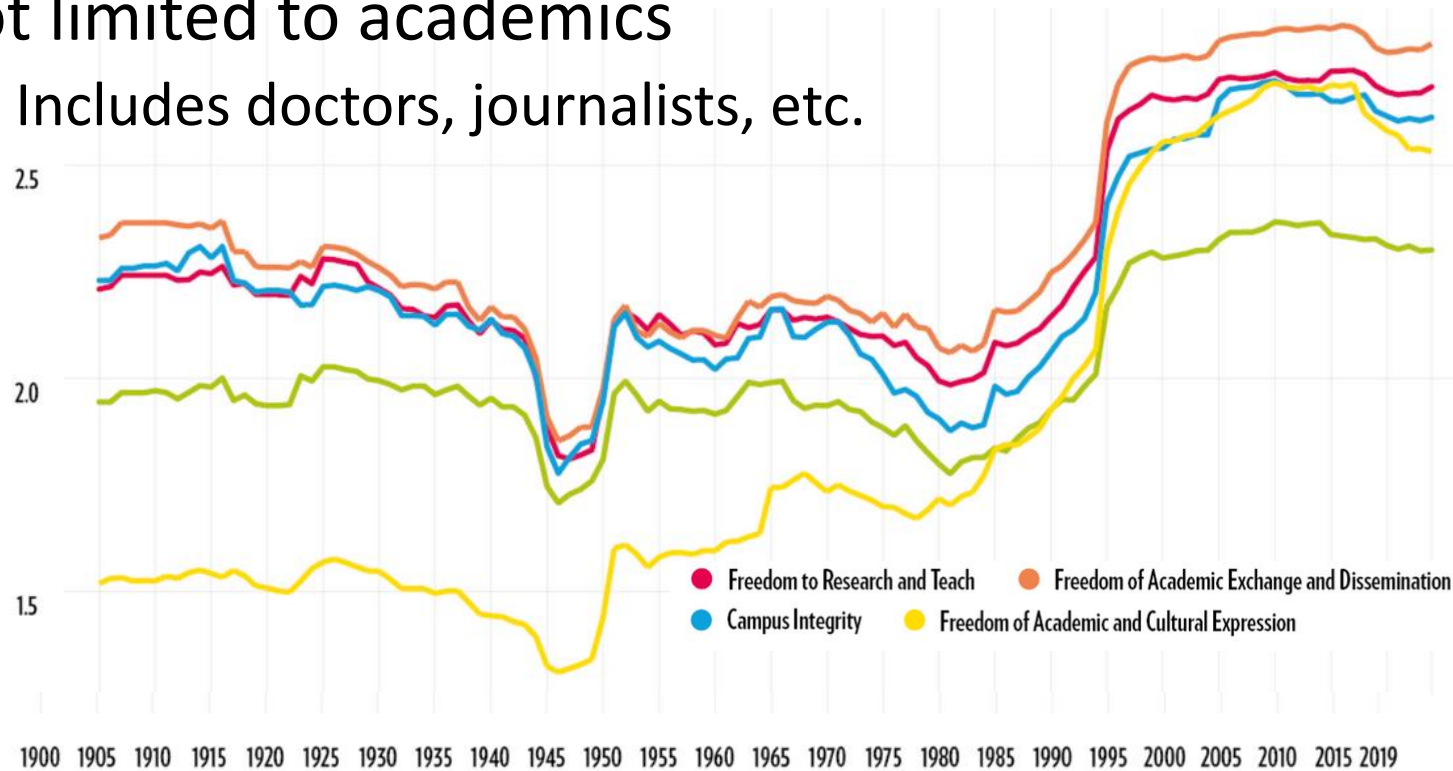
# The Good That Can Be Done

- As opposed to ‘thou shalt not’, many codes reference the good
  - Example: UK data Ethics code “intention to “maximise the value of data whilst also setting the highest standards for transparency and accountability when building or buying new data technology” (Gov.UK, 2018).
  - Example: Sorbonne Declaration (2020) points to “the benefit of society and economic development” that accrues as a result of data research.
  - Example: Open University, for example, asserts that the purpose of collecting data should be “to identify ways of effectively supporting students to achieve their declared study goals” (OU, 2014:4.2.2).



# Academic or Professional Freedom

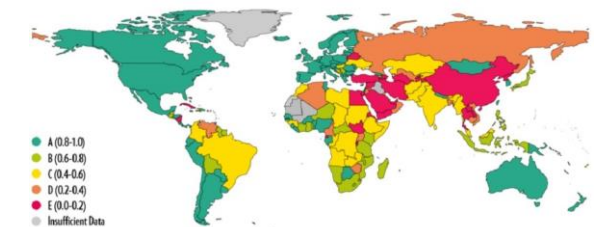
- Surfaces frequently
- Not merely a 'good', but an obligation
- Not limited to academics
  - Includes doctors, journalists, etc.



<https://www.scholarsatrick.org/resources/free-universities-putting-the-academic-freedom-index-into-action/>

<https://www.ei-ie.org/en/item/24856>

Figure 1: Global Levels of Academic Freedom 2020: Status Groups According to the Academic Freedom Index

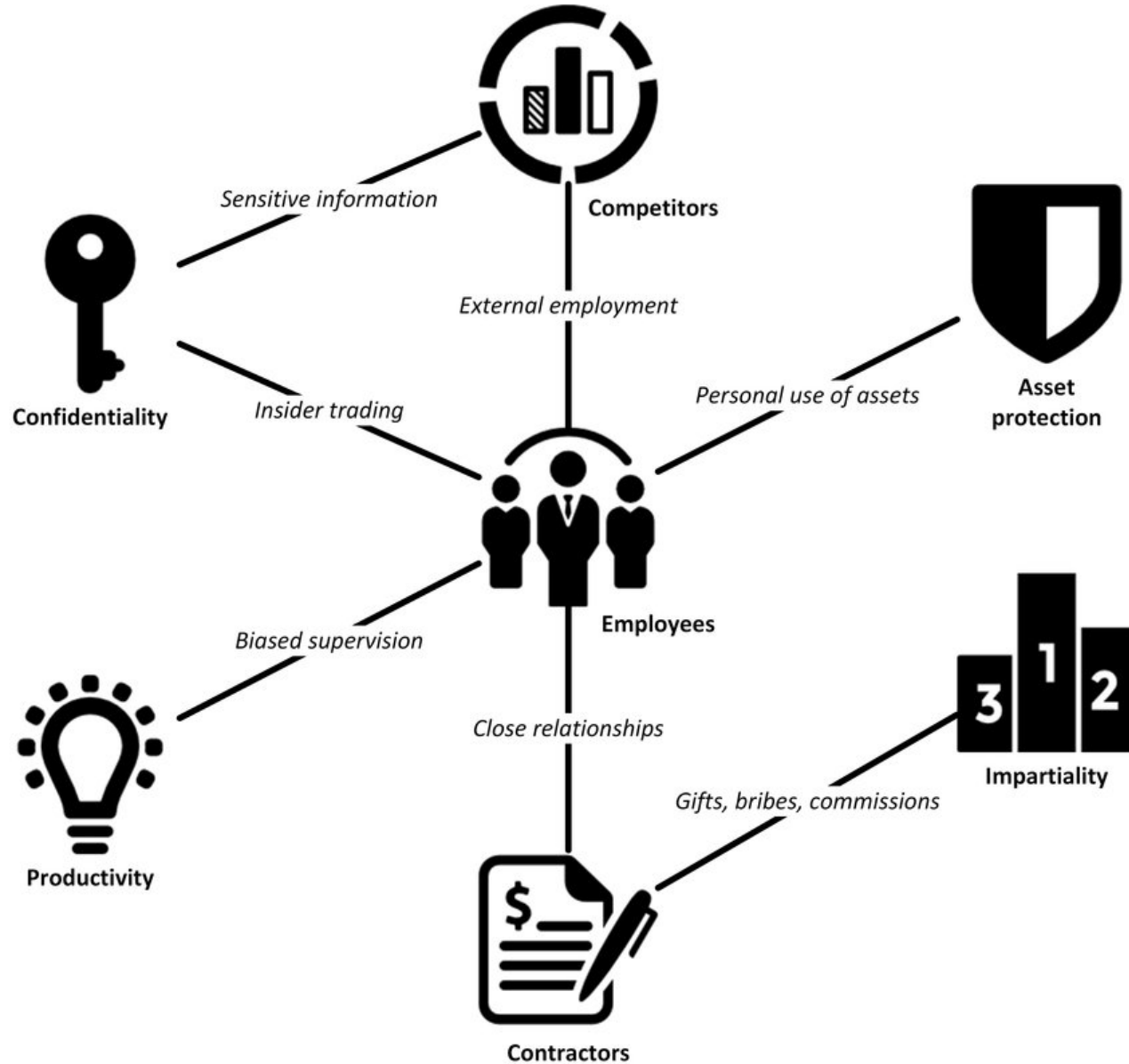


Source: AFI status group concept developed by the authors, based on V-Dem data (v11)

# Conflict of Interest

The idea that a person would use their position to personally benefit from their position of privilege or responsibility, whether directly or through the offer of gifts or benefits, is expressly prohibited by many (but by no mean all) codes of ethics (CFA, 2019; IEEE, 2020: 7.8; SFU, 1992; CPA, 2017).

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322291829\\_Conflicts\\_of\\_interest\\_in\\_business\\_A\\_review\\_of\\_the\\_concept](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322291829_Conflicts_of_interest_in_business_A_review_of_the_concept)



# Conflict of Interest



"You are completely free to carry out whatever research you want, so long as you come to these conclusions."

<https://sites.wp.odu.edu/research-integrity/conflicts-of-interest/>

Other codes focus on integrity. We see this in professions like journalism, where “professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist’s credibility” (SPJ, 1996) and journalists are urged “to remain independent (and therefore avoid conflict of interest), and to be accountable” (SPJ, 2014).

- Question: what counts as a benefit?

# Harm

- Many codes stress the need to ‘do no harm’
- Often, the nature of harm is loosely defined:
  - Harm not limited to clients, but ‘downstream’ harm also considered
  - Discrimination and human rights violations are often cited as sources of harm
  - Some codes describe what will *not* be considered as harm
- Risk vs. Benefit



# Quality and Standards



- Sometimes defined in terms of competence – ‘stewardship and excellence’
- Sometimes defined in terms of qualifications to prevent ‘unauthorized practice’
- Sometimes in terms of exemplary behaviours such as research integrity, scientific rigor and recognition of sources.



# What Are The Limits?

Some ethical codes seek to address the limits of what can be done ethically.

- IBM to cease work in general facial recognition technology, for example (Krishna, 2020)
- Standard “to create not undirected intelligence, but beneficial intelligence” (Asilomar, 2017).
- Many individual researchers refuse to work on military or intelligence applications (Shane & Wakabayashi, 2018).
- Research Ethics Boards (REB) often require scientific merit and research need.

