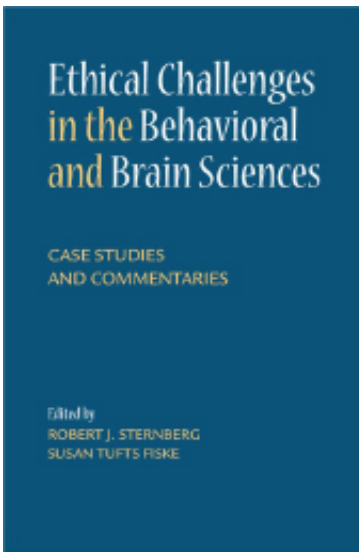


Book urges scientists to wrestle with ethical dilemmas

December 9 2014, by Karene Booker



Equipping social scientists for ethical challenges is the aim of a new book, "Ethical Challenges in the Brain and Behavioral Sciences: Case Studies and Commentaries" (Cambridge University Press), edited by Cornell psychologist Robert Sternberg and Susan Fiske of Princeton University. The volume's eye-opening and cautionary tales about real-world ethical dilemmas are intended not to provide "correct" answers, but to prompt readers to reflect on how to resolve ethics problems before encountering them.

"Students learn a lot of content knowledge in graduate school, but not necessarily much about the ethical expectations of the field," said Sternberg, professor of human development in the College of Human Ecology.

The advantage of case studies is that the lessons are more concrete and easy to apply than abstract ethical "principles," he said. "This book provides ethical case studies in the whole range of situations that a behavioral or brain scientist might confront – in teaching, research and service."

The volume is notable for its breadth – covering topics such as testing and grading, authorship and credit, confidentiality, data fabrication, [human subjects research](#), personnel decisions, reviewing and editing, and conflicts of interest – and for the nearly 60 prominent scientists who took time out to share their wisdom by contributing a chapter. Each chapter includes a first-hand account of an ethical problem, how it was resolved and what the scientist would have done differently. Commentary on the greater [ethical dilemmas](#) follows each section, and the book wraps up with a model by Sternberg for thinking about ethical reasoning.

"Ethical Challenges" is intended for students, teachers and researchers in the behavioral and brain sciences. Although it is oriented toward those early in their career, senior faculty will also have a lot to learn from the case studies.

"After almost 40 years in the field, I thought I'd seen it all in terms of ethical challenges - I had no idea just how many different ones there were, and how many I have been fortunate enough not to have encountered ... yet," Sternberg concluded.

Provided by Cornell University

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