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Until a short time ago, I was a full-fledged, wholly unreflexive, and mostly enthusiastic, scientist. My science of choice was the science of human heredity. I pursued this science vigorously and with the aim of understanding the biological basis of the enormous phenotypic diversity of the human species. I worked first at a laboratory bench, applying molecular genetic techniques to the identification of DNA level variations found among individuals sampled from a variety of geographic locations. Later I sat mostly at a computer terminal, working to interpret the meaning and significance of genetic variation data generated by others. I was a decent scientist: not perhaps the most creative or compelling, but I did solid, acceptable, and empirically sound, research and made modest contributions to what is now a large and growing literature detailing the genesis and maintenance of human genetic variation.

I left the day-to-day practice of human genetics because I was dissatisfied. I was dissatisfied with the content of the science I was pursuing, unable to identify the relevance of much of the work that I and my colleagues were engaged in, and concerned by the implications of encroaching commercialization and centralization of effort within my discipline. In short, I left genetics because I could no longer reconcile the *ideal* of objective science with the *practice* of science that I observed all around me. More positively, I was fortunate to have friends and advisors who pushed me to articulate these concerns and then supported me as I searched for a solution for my malaise. That solution took the form of a period of retraining (with funding from the NIH) which involved mentors working in the history and philosophy of science, bioethics, and feminist science studies at Penn State University. My research interests then turned from the description of genetic variation to a description of the character and significance of genetic research, particularly as it is conducted here in the US in the current moment.

It is difficult for me to overstate the extent of my naïvete as I began the transition from scientific practice to *the study of* scientific practice. Before my retraining I believed that “facts” about the natural world are discovered, not made. I believed that the role of ethical inquiry was to examine the implications of scientific discoveries for society, rather than to interrogate the role that societal values play in shaping the character and direction of empirical investigation. I believed, though there was ample contradictory evidence all around me, that epistemic “success” in genetics (indeed any science) depended on an adherence to pre-established rules (the Scientific Method), and not on one’s race, gender, class, or institutional positioning. I took for granted that Science was the only reliable mechanism for making sense of the world and that, whatever the nature of our contemporary biases or analytical imprecisions, Truth would eventually be revealed by its sustained application.

My immersion in the Cultural Studies of Science undermined these beliefs, so thoroughly that there is no returning to my pre-Science Studies point of view. Still, I am close enough to that former life (my former self), to understand why the notion of the social construction of knowledge is so perplexing – and downright troubling – for many scientists and clinicians. There are days when I yearn for the certainty of my naïve positivist past. Such liminality is, of course, both useful and exceedingly complicated. I am at an advantage with respect to data collection because of my ability to “pass” in the course of scientific exchanges, but vulnerable to a host of implicit assumptions that threaten my ability to transcend these interactions and place their meaning and relevance in broader cultural context. I also struggle – mightily – with the problem of reconciling the descriptive portion of my research with the normative analytical expectations that come along with being situated in a department of biomedical ethics. While my retraining has helped illuminate the roles that values *have* played, *can* play, and actually *are* playing in scientific practice – I will confess to being frequently flummoxed on the issue of what these observations tell us about the role that values *ought* to play in scientific research.