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Variation in Valuation: How Research Groups Accumulate Credibility in Four Epistemic Cultures / Laurens K. Hessels ...

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore disciplinary variation in valuation practices by comparing the way research groups accumulate credibility across four epistemic cultures. Our analysis is based on case studies of four high-performing research groups representing very different epistemic cultures in humanities, social sciences, geosciences and mathematics. In each case we interviewed about ten researchers, analyzed relevant documents and observed a couple of meetings. In all four cases we found a cyclical process of accumulating credibility. At the same time, we found significant differences in the manifestation of the six main resources that are part of the cycle, the mechanisms of conversion between these resources, the overall structure and the average speed of the credibility cycle. The different ways in which the groups use data and produce arguments affect the whole cycle of accumulating credibility. In some cultures, journal publications are the main source of recognition, but in others one can earn significant amounts of recognition for conference contributions or service to the academic community. Moreover, the collaboration practices in the respective fields strongly

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influence the connection between arguments and publications. In cultures where teams of researchers collaboratively produce arguments, it is more strongly embedded in the process of writing publications. We conclude that the credibility cycle can only be used as an analytical tool to explain the behavior of researchers or research groups when taking differences across epistemic cultures into account. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)