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Constructing scholarship: What ethical standards will *you* set?



A new writer may focus primarily on his or her individual role in the scholarship process and fail to identify with other stakeholders. This inexperience may place writers at risk for breaking the social contract implicit in writing for publication. Hence, they need practice constructing a scholarship ethic.

Instructions: Search the academic press, such as *Science* or *Nature*, for a real case study in plagiarism (example: “Responding to Possible Plagiarism” from the journal *Science*, March 6, 2009). Share it with participants. Then, read the following descriptions and situations facing key stakeholders typically in the process. Get into pairs, or small groups, and advocate for one role. Discuss the most important assumptions you would make about the quality of a written research product for that role. Do your assumptions conflict with the needs and assumptions of others? List the 3 most important assumptions and explain why. Then speak to what happened in the article and where and why the ethics broke down.

- 1) **Reader/Consumer of Research:** You have just paid to obtain a copy of a dissertation through interlibrary loan and it’s an important source for your thesis; you also pay \$300 to subscribe to a top-tier journal. What are your assumptions about the integrity of the authors publishing?
- 2) **Mentor/Advisor:** You are the chair of a thesis committee, and one of your student mentees has just emailed you a rough draft of his/her literature review. What are your assumptions about the student’s work? Does it reflect on you?
- 3) **Journal Editor:** You are the editor of a prestigious journal and you review hundreds of manuscripts every year. You have just received a submission from a team of researchers at a leading, research-intensive university. What are your assumptions about the article/authors?
- 4) **Original Source:** You are a leading researcher in the field, and you read an article in which your research has been used. What are your assumptions about the ethics of the author in the treatment of your work?
- 5) **First author/Co-author(s):** You are collaborating on an article for publication. You have invested 3 years in the work, and you need it to get your PhD. You are the first author. What are your assumptions about your colleagues, their writing and citing processes?