

Ethical Behaviours vs Behaviours that Contravene Deontological Research Principles in the Publishing Process

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Introduction

The present paper aims to explore – though not exhaustively review – the vast and complex topic of ethical behaviours and deontological principles in academic research, specifically in the publishing process. The most pressing questions were identified by administering a survey to a convenience sample of doctoral students, and subsequently organized based on major themes that constitute the sections of the present article. The answers I shall be offering are based on publications from various organizations of academic publishers – such as the “Committee on Publication Ethics-COPE”¹ –, as well as on the policies of international scientific journals or the organizations responsible for them – for instance the documents published by the AFM on authors ethics and journal deontology, which can be consulted at <https://www.afm-marketing.com/fr/content/ethique-des-auteurs-et-deontologie-des-revues> (in French). Ethical behaviour, however, is a complex topic that spans a number of different – though sometimes overlapping – fields. In some cases, the problem is purely legal, and as such the exclusive responsibility of courts. Academic publishing, however, is ruled by a set of principles and codes, including the above-mentioned COPE guidelines, which are adhered to by all stakeholders in the publishing process, especially publishers and journal editors. These principles and codes are supplemented by professional deontological rules that have long remained implicit but increasingly tend to be publicized by the various stakeholders – e.g. research institutes, scientific journals, and the (often not-for-profit) institutions that control the latter. Finally, some of the issues raised in the present article pertain to personal ethics. A distinction needs to be made between deontology and ethics, a short definition of which ought to be given here, as these terms often get mixed up, not least because English tends to bundle both in “ethics”. Deontology is the set of rules and duties that regulate the conduct of members of a profession. In the present case, these rules are established by the scientific community which, for its own good,

needs to ensure that they are enforced and that any breach shall effectively be sanctioned. Ethics pertains to the set of moral values that underpins the individual activities of scholars who may find themselves in the situation of having to figure out, for and by themselves, which conduct they consider most appropriate from an ethical perspective. While “academic integrity” – the most commonly-used wording both in scholarly circles and in organizations involved in the publishing process – essentially covers the deontological rules scholars are expected to comply with, it does also include the core ethical values that should guide them for acting honestly and responsibly. Among my answers, I shall identify those that have a more personal character and for which my professional experience as a scholar, editor-in-chief of academic journals, and chairman of the Anti-Plagiarism Committee at the French Foundation for Management Education-FNEGE may offer some guidance, although my answers will by no means purport to be “definitive” and adhered to by any and all scholars.

The questions asked in this paper may be classified into seven categories, each of which constitutes a section of the article: 1) ethics in data collection; 2) the writing process; 3) collaborative writing; 4) submitting a manuscript to an academic journal; 5) how not to be accused of, or fall prey to, plagiarism; 6) redundancy in publications; and 7) thesis director-doctoral student relationships.

1. Academic Integrity in Data Collection

How do you convince readers that your data collection process does meet the journal’s ethical standards?

Data collection raises ethical issues mostly as far as experimental studies are concerned. Since secondary data collection appears less problematic, the only real bones of contention are 1) whether the use of databases should be (dis)allowed; and 2) how marginal the contribution of some studies appears to be relative to other publications relying on the same data sets—in which case the extent of the contribution should be clarified in the paper, with explicit references to previous works introducing and analysing said data. While some of the obligations pertaining to experimental studies also apply to surveys, these are usually not concerned with the most delicate points, which will be identified below. Qualitative studies have demands of their own, to be introduced at a later stage. As is the case for the above-mentioned collection methods, researchers must give a precise description of the data collection process (sample selection and size, participants characteristics, etc.) at every stage, so that the study may be replicated, including whether and why some data were excluded from the sample.

Experimental Research

Experimental research raises privacy issues and involves ensuring that individuals taking part in the study may not be manipulated, which would potentially introduce bias in the study and its results, and/or harm the physical or mental well-being of the participants. As a result, obligations have been introduced, including a number of formalities that need to be dealt with upon submission of the manuscript, as well as detailed descriptions of the measures that were taken to ensure that research was ethically conducted. The following sections draw heavily from the following documents:

“*Recommandations de l’AFM aux Auteurs.e.s, en Faveur d’une Éthique de la Recherche et d’une Intégrité Scientifique*” (in French), Association Française de Marketing 2018: <https://www.afm-marketing.com/fr/content/ethique-des-auteurs-et-deontologie-des-revues> (in French); “Protection of Research Participants”, INSEAD (2012a); “Ethical Procedures for Research with Human Participants”, INSEAD (2012b). The duties of scholars conducting research with human participants are the following:

- **Compulsory Ethical Review.** Any research involving human participants or the use of personal data, regardless of whether it is conducted online or off-line, should be submitted to an “ethics committee”. Some academic journals even require that a certificate be issued, even though the nature of the committee itself may vary, since certain fields such as medicine have specific requirements – which may in turn impact those behavioural studies in Marketing that deal with neuroscience.

- **Principle of Risk Reduction.** Participation in research should not place participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, reputation, or physical well-being. More generally, their psychological well-being should not be affected, and in particular they should not be subjected to unusual stress. Risk here is measured both in terms of probability and the magnitude of the harm or discomfort induced by the experiment, and minimal risk can be defined as such that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. Some factors may induce greater risk than acceptable:

- Some participants belong to **vulnerable groups**, for instance children and young people, those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment, or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship (e.g. hierarchical). Students who are being evaluated by a member of the research team are considered a vulnerable group.

- Research involving **sensitive topics** – for example participants’ sexual behaviour, their illegal or political behaviour, their experience of violence, their abuse or exploitation, their mental health.
- Research involving groups where **permission of a gatekeeper** is normally required for initial access to members – for example research in communities where access to research participants is not possible without the permission of another adult, such as another family member or a community leader.
- Research involving access to records of **personal or confidential information**, including genetic or other biological information, concerning identifiable individuals.
- Research involving **deception**, or which is conducted without participants’ full and informed consent at the time the study is carried out.
- Research which would induce psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation.
- Research involving **intrusive interventions** – for example, the administration of drugs or other substances, vigorous physical exercise, or techniques such as hypnotherapy.

- ***Informed Consent.*** Human participants to an experiment should give their full and informed consent. However, explicit content may not be necessary if public interest is deemed more important than potential private harm, or if consent may not reasonably be obtained,² or whenever the likelihood of any individual making an objection is extremely low. Participants should receive an explanation of the nature of the research, the procedures in which they will be asked to participate, any possible benefits or risks with their participation, the steps that will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of their data, and how their data will be used and stored.³ Participation in studies involving factors that may create more than minimal risk (defined above) should be voluntary.

- ***Debriefing.*** Participants in experimental studies must receive written or oral debriefing. The goal of the debriefing is to explain what the study wanted to show. The debriefing needs to be in a language that the participants can understand and relate to. The debriefing can be communicated either directly to participants after the study, or after the data collection is finished (in a reasonable time frame of about four weeks). The debriefing should mention the name and phone number of a contact person.

- ***Information requests.*** Upon requests from participants, researchers should provide a summary of the research in a reasonable time period.

- **Protection of data.** Private data should be stored in such a way that they are protected from unauthorized access. Linking people's data with any identifying information should not be possible and thus, data should be stored without identifiers whenever possible. Researchers must explain to participants how their data will be used and stored.

- **Participant compensation.** Willingness to volunteer to take part in research may be unduly influenced by the expectation of benefits or rewards. Payments made to individuals must be stated explicitly before participating in the study, including the show-up fee that participants will obtain if they are excluded from the study (this only applies for off-line studies).

Payment must not be so large as to induce the individuals to risk harm beyond that which they would usually undertake.

- **Principal Investigator.** For any study one Principal Investigator (PI) should be explicitly named, as should the establishment, university, or organization he or she is affiliated to. Doctoral students must list a faculty member supervising their work as PI. The PI is responsible for verifying that everybody involved in the research adheres to ethical research and academic integrity principles.

- **Procedure.** If there is reason to believe that a participant is suffering or has suffered any harm, anticipated or not, as a result of participation, research must be suspended, and the relevant authorities must be informed. Research may not resume until approval is given to proceed by these authorities.

Qualitative Research

As far as qualitative research is concerned, the main issue is one of selection, as researchers need to choose which interviews and analysis method to use. Since transcribing and including each and every interview is utterly impractical, only some parts of some interviews will make it into the final version of a given paper, in order to support findings that may contribute to the development of novel theories. Both this selection process and the analysis of the interviews can be biased. The editor-in-chief⁴ of a journal may ask authors to supply both a detailed analysis framework and a random selection of interview transcripts, if and when these had not already been submitted with the manuscript or as an online supplement. Authors must be prepared for this whenever they do not spontaneously provide these elements – which are a necessity if their research is to be made transparent and replicable.

Some publications, such as the *Journal of Consumer Research* (Journal of Consumer Research 2018), demand that a separate note on data collection be submitted along with the manuscript. This

note should mention where, when, and by whom the data were collected and analysed. Whenever a lab technician or engineer, or a research assistant, has been tasked with collecting data under the supervision of one of the authors, this author must be mentioned.

What rights do funding bodies have, at the various stages of the project, over the data and research they fund? What happens if the funding body is at odds with the findings?

The rights of funding bodies are a major issue, and scholars should be very careful about the nature of the contract that binds them to the organization that funds their research. This may sometimes involve taking legal precautions. Therefore, this question cannot receive a broad answer. The crux of the matter is (primary or secondary) data publication, and permission of publication of the manuscript. Researchers and funding bodies need to agree on how to provide recognition for both the funding and the data. Although formal acknowledgements are usually included in the paper, some business organizations may request anonymity so that the data they provided may not be traced to any specific brand or company.

The question of permission for publication must be clarified before the research even starts, so as to avoid wasting time on unpublishable work. As far as case studies are concerned, granting a right of review before publication is normal practice. For academic papers though, this matter needs to be settled before embarking on the research. While preserving the anonymity of the data source is perfectly normal, for an organization to insist that a study may not be published contravenes the ethical principles of academic research. Therefore, the terms of permission for publication must be explicitly agreed between the parties before the research starts.

Data rights is a more delicate issue, as the practice of open science involves granting free access to research content, including the data in some cases. This is particularly true in the case of publicly-funded research. Free access is justified by the need for replicability of the research, and so that hypotheses may potentially be disproved by later analyses – generally speaking, the idea is that opposing or complementary theories should be confronted for science to advance. Some journals demand that research data be made accessible not only to reviewers, but also to other interested scholars. Such requirements are in the spirit of scientific research, which ought to be in the public domain. Some researchers argue that building a database requires considerable time and effort, and it is therefore unfair to make it accessible to others who had no part in this effort. Although journal policies vary on this point, the development of scientific knowledge is one strong argument in

favour of granting free access to all data underlying peer-reviewed publications which, as such, should be considered as falling in the public domain.

As a consequence, these matters have got to be contractually decided with funding bodies and data providers before the start of any research study.

2. The Writing Process

Should an article be written in such a way as to reflect the idea that research is a controlled, linear process, when it actually isn't? Is it unethical to try and improve readability?

This question actually pertains to the broader issue of scientific misconduct. There are of course far more blatant instances of misconduct – data forgery, falsification of findings, stimulus distortion spring to mind. The question as it is formulated spans several potential types of issues, all of which stem from a lack of rigour in the description of how the research unfolded, which typically involves omitting or cherry-picking (“cooking”, “finagling”, fudging” ...) data, analytical processes, or findings. The problem, therefore, lies not so much in the linearity of the narrative as in the exhaustivity of the information required for properly assessing a research study. The manuscript should thus imperatively either offer analyses that cover all the available data or justify why some have been discarded (for instance outliers, or participants whose behaviour during an experiment was considered abnormal). The same applies to variations of estimated models. In the case of an experiment, failure to mention each of the samples that were analysed in succession, or potential changes in procedures or stimuli, falls into that same category. However, while all this information is necessary, including it may indeed prove detrimental to the readability of the paper. The solution of course is to resort to an Appendix section.

3. Collaborative Writing

When data that have been collected by several researchers for a collaborative project, who is the owner?

Leaving aside the strictly legal definition of such notions as “owning” and “property”, this question is primarily one of co-authorship, which makes it relevant to our exploration of ethics and deontology in academic publishing. Collaborative research is the joint property of all the researchers involved. Each and every co-author is thus co-responsible for the published work. In the case of research published in a peer-reviewed journal, data should fall in the public domain, as explained above. Before publication, for all the collected data that is not related to the published

work (for instance, a survey can be used as an opportunity to ask questions related to another project, even though some consistency needs to be maintained towards the respondents who have been given one specific reason for the study), all collaborators have significantly contributed to the research and are thus legitimately co-authors of all manuscripts derived from these data. Omitting their names from the list of co-authors would therefore be unethical. Regarding the case mentioned in parentheses, where part of the survey belongs to a distinct research agenda, a written agreement should be drafted as a note signed by all researchers involved. This note should specify that the research associated to these data is exclusive to one or several of them and will be presented in a separate article, not co-authored by the remaining collaborators.

When these data have been published and are subsequently – even partly – used for other articles, the contribution of these researchers must be acknowledged by naming them as co-authors. In this case of course, as described above, any published article based on the same data should be properly quoted, and justification should be given of the paper's novel contribution. Obviously, any collaborator involved in the collection of data may request to not be considered a co-author, especially if they disagree with the new study. When a research project uses some data to explore a matter that is totally unrelated to previous publications, the authors of said publication need not necessarily be co-authors. In this case, it would be wise to obtain the agreement of the authors who are no longer involved. However, their contribution to data collection should still be acknowledged with a note in the article, which will also quote any previously published works that may be considered similar, if only in terms of data collection methods and sample description.

In case of a dispute among co-authors during a project, who owns the intellectual property rights over the data and the work accomplished so far? How can the dispute be settled, if at all possible?

The first sub-question is linked to the previous one, as the underlying principle remains the same. Again, I shall answer not from the legal perspective of intellectual property rights management, but from the point of view of academic research ethics. One should bear in mind that ideas cannot be protected, even legally. However, the above-mentioned case of data collection management notwithstanding, all the work that is accomplished before publication or public diffusion occurs in the sphere of ideas – conceptualising, reviewing the literature, examining previously-used methodology in order to decide which one to choose, etc. When several scholars collaborate to a common project, this collaboration is indivisible. None of them can morally pretend to use what has been jointly elaborated without obtaining consent from everyone else, nor can any collaborators be

omitted from the list of co-authors. In this respect, it should be remembered that using a dominant position (such a thesis director vs a student) to obtain consent from one collaborator would constitute a flagrant breach of the ethics of academic research.

There is no miracle answer to the second sub-question. Such disputes can only be resolved through discussion and team spirit should be an integral part of any collective project. The most senior co-author can often act as a mediator. If co-authors still can't find any common ground, I would recommend resorting to a neutral colleague to facilitate the discussion. While this colleague may occupy a higher rank or position than all co-authors, none of the collaborators involved in the dispute should report to him or her, as this would create a conflict of interest. Some universities now have academic integrity delegates or committees who can mediate such disputes.

Are there any guidelines on how to order author names? How is this to be determined?

Although different academic fields have different practices, co-authors and co-authors only are responsible for the ordering of names, a principle adhered to by management science journals. The question of altering the name order, and even adding or removing an author, is discussed by Elsevier, and specifically the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, in "Policies and Ethics" (Elsevier, 2018). No change can be made after a manuscript has been accepted for publication. During the review process, the corresponding author should let the editor-in-chief know why a change is requested and get all co-authors to approve of it in writing. No co-author can be removed without their own written approval. As these dispositions hopefully make clear, the importance of this topic cannot be overstated, and I would thus strongly advise co-authors to discuss the matter of author order at the onset of the project. Even though it is not always the case, alphabetical order implicitly reflects equal contribution from all authors. Should their collaboration last, co-authors may agree to alter the name order over time. Indeed, while alphabetical order is the rule in some fields, name order usually reflects the magnitude of each contribution, the first-named co-author having contributed significantly more than the others. Obviously, this order may vary according to actual individual contributions. Writing the initial draft of an article is a key step for consistently conveying the paper's underlying theoretical framework, concepts, and empirical approaches. As such, it is often considered a major contribution warranting first author status. However, practices vary, and name order is best determined through consensual decisions made by a good-willed team of authors.

Needless to say, granting access to previously collected and published data does not entitle one to be considered a co-author on new projects. The ethics of academic research clearly consider these data to have fallen in the public domain after being published. Making data available is normal practice, refusing to do it would be unethical, and no compensation should be expected in return. However, any scholar granting access to their data and making a significant contribution to the new article becomes a legitimate co-author thereof.

Additionally, to be considered a co-author, a researcher needs to have significantly contributed to the design, research planning, implementation and/or interpretation phases of the study.

Furthermore, no one having offered such a contribution can be removed from the list of authors. An acknowledgement section can be used to thank whoever took part in the study yet did not make a contribution warranting co-author status as described above. This applies especially to lab technicians and research assistants whose support was particularly appreciated regarding some aspects of the research project – see for instance “Guidelines for Ethical Behavior in Publishing” by *Marketing Science/INFORMS* (INFORMS 2018). Detailed advice on how to address authorship disputes can be found in the COPE Report 2003 (Albert and Wager 2003).

When is the supervisor of a research project entitled to be considered a co-author? Even though a doctoral student benefits from the supervision, can the thesis director be a rightful co-author?

These questions actually raise two distinct issues, to be treated separately. One has to do with thesis work, and the other with research projects that, although not part of the thesis, are most likely linked.

Generally speaking, supervising a research project does not make one eligible to authorship.

Research project supervision is part and parcel of an academic’s duties; in fact, significant benefits can be derived from this task, and new knowledge can be acquired by interacting with doctoral students—or students in general. Still, as previously mentioned, collaborators in a research project need to have significantly contributed to the design, research planning, implementation and/or interpretation phases of the study. Therefore, while supervision *per se* does not warrant co-author legitimacy, it is in most cases likely to involve some contribution that may rightfully make the supervisor a co-author. Thus, in case a research project is distinct from a thesis, the supervisor might legitimately be included in the list of co-authors. Nevertheless, the conditions must actually be met, and supervisors should not by any means press for inclusion if they are not. Abuse of office

would be particularly objectionable here, given the asymmetrical nature of the director-student relationship, the assessment and career of the latter being in the hands of the former.

Work on a doctoral thesis is a different matter altogether, as candidates are expected to produce some personal work showcasing their ability to make an original contribution to science. As a consequence, thesis supervision consists in guiding the author so that their output may be considered an original contribution. The thesis will be signed, and thus authored, by the student, which means that in no way, shape, or form can the supervisor claim authorship. A thesis defence is a dated document that falls in the public domain, whose sole author is the new doctor. The thesis director has thus no rightful basis for claiming to be the co-author of a work that was indeed “published”, although not in a peer-reviewed journal indeed, and whose legitimate author has been officially recognized by the institution which awarded them a doctorate. A thesis is special in the sense that it is not considered as an academic publication, hence it can be published in a scientific journal without lending itself to accusations of plagiarism. Turning a thesis into a paper that might be submitted for publication is a potentially delicate task; in this context the thesis director’s contribution may warrant author status. As is the case for any publication though, this can only happen if the thesis director significantly contributed to the design, research planning, implementation and/or interpretation phases of the study beyond what was done in the context of thesis supervision.

One specific case we still need to examine is the article thesis – or “thesis as a collection of articles”. Here, the thesis remains an individual effort that serves as proof of the author’s ability to make an original contribution. The argument that this original contribution is to be found in a series of loosely-connected articles may be acceptable in some cases. However, some criteria ought to be met in my opinion. First, the personal contribution of the doctoral student should be made explicit. This is often done by way of an opening chapter introducing what the articles (i.e. thesis chapters) have in common: this constitutes the author’s original input. The second condition aims to address the contradiction of having on the one hand a thesis signed by the doctoral student as author of this work, and on the other hand chapters that were co-signed by collaborators to the original articles. Whenever the chapters-articles were single-handedly authored by the signatory, the latter’s contribution to his or her thesis is self-explanatory. However, these articles may have resulted from a collaborative process involving other researchers. In order to maintain general consistency around the author of the thesis, my recommendation is to insert as a thesis chapter an early version of the article (for instance the first draft submitted for publication in an academic journal) that might better

reflect the doctoral student's contribution, with a footnote specifying that this was followed by a more elaborate, possibly published version, at which point the list of co-authors may be appended. If the article was indeed published, the full reference should be given in the note, possibly supplemented by the relevant URL or the actual article as an appendix. Obviously, a co-authored article used as a thesis chapter may not be used as a thesis chapter by another co-author. It is thus key that a co-authored article used as a thesis chapter reflect mostly the contribution of the thesis writer, which in all due logic means that the latter should be the first author, following the above-mentioned principles on name ordering. It is in fact recommended that the thesis writer be the sole author of at least one chapter-article, in addition to the introduction and conclusion. Another research ethics issue here is whether thesis chapters may be authored by the thesis director. The issue of actual contribution mentioned in a previous answer notwithstanding, this begs the question of whether the "co-author" thesis director may not have a conflict of interest here. Since the thesis director is usually involved in the selection process of the thesis committee members (including, crucially, in the French system, the "*rapporteurs*", i.e. the two members of the jury who are specifically in charge of reviewing the thesis itself), he or she may affect thesis evaluation, however indirectly. Conflict of interest is of course a serious violation of academic deontology. Therefore, thesis chapter-articles co-authored by the thesis director should be used parsimoniously, if at all.

4. Submitting an Article to an Academic Journal

Is it ethical to submit for publication in an academic journal an article that is already being reviewed for a conference?

Simultaneously submitting a manuscript to several academic journals is strictly forbidden under penalty of having the manuscript removed from all review processes. Journals actually request researchers to certify, upon submission, that the article is an original one and is not being submitted elsewhere. In the case of a conference, however, a distinction must be made as to whether proceedings will be published, and the paper included therein. When presenting at a conference is subject to submitting a paper but no proceedings are to be published, the paper may simultaneously be submitted for approval at the conference and for peer review at a journal. Should the integral manuscript, however, be published in the proceedings (whether in print or electronic format), then it would fall under the general case of double submission, which is strictly a rule violation. Some conference proceedings are mere summaries; in other cases, authors may choose whether the full version or only the summary will be published. It is generally admitted that a summary may be published without counting as a double submission if it does not exceed five pages. However,

authors are invited to exercise caution and check the guidelines of the journal they are submitting their article to, especially in case of a potential double submission. Some academic journals refuse to publish materials that have appeared in conference proceedings, even as summaries, for fear of plagiarism issues. This also applies to charts and figures that may have been used in summaries. Conference presentations should therefore be viewed as preliminary works destined to be modified before submission and publication in an academic journal.

The question also applies to Working Papers and websites such as ResearchGate,⁵ which are useful channels for publicising research before publication in academic journals. Although publicly available, these media are not considered to be publishing outlets that may affect the conditions of submission of an article to academic journals. I particularly recommend publishing an article in a Working Papers series – typically that of the author’s institution of affiliation – as such papers may be used as evidence in cases of plagiarism. However, once an article has been accepted for publication, or of course published, the situation is different. Whether such publications should be freely accessible will be discussed below.

Should manuscripts be anonymized?

As mentioned in a 2017 COPE Council document, there are many models of peer review. While in some fields the double-blind review system may not be the most common practice, this method is favoured by the vast majority of academic management science journals, as it offers the best guarantees that the reviewers’ judgment will not be biased by the fact that they may know the authors. In particular, it would be unethical for an author to informally submit an article to potential reviewers for pre-review purposes (should these readers be asked to review this article, the editor-in-chief would be informed). Similarly, looking up the authors’ names – with a search engine for instance – is unethical.

Another, more specific question is whether authors may reference their own publications and thesis. Although publicly available and protected against plagiarism, a thesis is not considered by academic journals to be a publication.⁶ This is because, although validated by a committee, a thesis need not be submitted to the kind of peer-review process that would give it the level of recognition and visibility only academic journals can offer. Nevertheless, while a manuscript based on a thesis may rightfully be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication, quoting the thesis would defeat the conditions of anonymity, and should thus be avoided. Additionally, while quoting one’s own publications is allowed when these happen to constitute the best source material, alternative sources should be preferred when available.

How can anonymity be maintained when the research context is particularly specific?

Admittedly, some research fields are so highly specialised that the above-mentioned rules are difficult to follow. Still, the stated principles should apply and be enforced as much as possible. Whenever anonymity is likely to be breached, the editor-in-chief, being responsible for the implementation of the editorial policy, is expected to act both as an advisor and a judge. In case of doubt, the authors – not just the reviewers – should appeal to him/her.

How can authors contribute both to open-access research and academic journals without violating self-plagiarism rules and copyright laws?

It should be noted that when an article is accepted for publication in a refereed journal, the editor typically demands that the final version shall not be made available on open-access publishing websites and may request that all other versions be removed once the article is actually published. Open-access diffusion is often accepted under conditions of payment to the copyright-owning publisher. What we have here is two opposing conceptions of academic publishing coming head-to-head. The traditional publishing system needs to be supported by a copyright system that will help fund the journals. While the advancement of science depends on the – swift, whenever possible – diffusion of knowledge, the rigour and impartiality of the review process need to be ensured. In this respect, a publication – be it electronic or not – whose validity is not guaranteed amounts to little more than “fake news”. It is therefore necessary that open-access publishing processes allow for the scientific validity and financial viability of academic publications.

5. Plagiarism

How much text can be borrowed from previous publications in the conceptual and/or methodological sections of an article?

Any verbatim use of text from a previous publication is considered plagiarism. However, up to ten lines of text may be quoted, provided quotation marks are used and full reference given, including page numbers. Quotations exceeding ten lines need to be rewritten, and the reference should still be given. Although the conceptual section of an article cannot but draw from existing publications, the conceptual framework ought to be original and should only consider the literature as a basis to be enriched and/or questioned. Therefore, no article may extensively use arguments developed in previous publications, since referencing them should be enough. On the contrary, the conceptual section of a publication is expected to make a contribution to the literature by offering an original overview of previous works.

As far as methodology is concerned, the answer is more straightforward: there is simply no reason to re-introduce the reader to a methodological approach that has been accurately described elsewhere and may thus simply be referenced. Should the article offer a variation of an existing methodology, then exploring where and why both approaches branch out might be necessary, but the source should still neither be copied nor even paraphrased.

Can a stage be identified in the development of a research project from which a researcher may claim intellectual property rights on an idea?

This is a frequently-asked question, daunting as the prospect of being stolen a research idea is to most researchers. Although my proposed answer can only apply to the field of academic research, it should be made absolutely clear that an idea cannot be legally protected – hence, there is no such thing as a stage from which intellectual property rights may be claimed. Only a text can be protected, and only if published in an academic journal, as the publication is then official, classified, dated, and its authors identified. It can be produced as evidence in plagiarism cases, either because the published text was used by another author who failed to properly reference it (“pure and simple” plagiarism), or because the gist of it was drawn upon but not referenced, which is a violation of deontological rules.⁷ This is why I recommend publishing a Working Paper version as soon as a research study is considered refined enough to be shared. Obviously, stealing a research idea is utterly unethical, even though proving that it was stolen can be quite difficult, if not impossible.

Before submission to an academic journal, and in order to avoid self-plagiarism, should significant changes be made to research that hasn’t been published yet, but was disseminated through a database?

Research that has been published in a Working Papers series or in a database, but has neither been peer-reviewed, nor published in an academic journal or a book, may be submitted “as is” to an academic journal. Obviously, no previous publication should be heavily drawn upon – or worse, reproduced – unless properly quoted and referenced. As indicated above, once a manuscript has been accepted for publication, the publisher will claim copyright and may demand that previous versions be removed from diffusion platforms – or kept under conditions.

6. Redundancy in Publications

Can several manuscripts using the same data be submitted for publication?

This question pertains to the more general problem of redundancy (a.k.a. “recycling”) in publications. Publications are deemed redundant when one or several authors (i.e. at least one of the

authors being common) repeatedly publish the same ideas or data. Publications such as the INFORMS journal, Marketing Science, or the Journal of Consumer Psychology, have very clear positions on the subject – clear enough, in fact, to constitute specific sections of their reference documents, “Guidelines for Ethical Behavior in Publishing” (INFORMS 2018) and “Policies and Ethics” (Elsevier 2018), respectively. Research is reviewed in terms of its contribution to the advancement of science. It follows that reviewers need to be able to assess the contribution of a study relative to prior knowledge and literature. In that sense, using the same data sets for several publications is possible, provided that each article clearly and specifically adds value – which implies that previous articles based on the same data must be quoted. If and when articles based on shared data are separately but simultaneously submitted to several academic journals, they should reference their respective “Working Paper” versions and justify the specific contribution of each article. This may be done either directly in the manuscript, or via a letter to the editor-in-chief. Should the contribution of one article be deemed insufficient, the editor-in-chief may suggest that the author combine several manuscripts so as to make the contribution more substantial. Publishing several articles whose contributions are insufficiently distinct constitutes a form of publication redundancy, and as such is considered as going against the deontological rules of academic publishing. Publishing articles that invalidate the findings of previous publications is an even more serious violation – this may happen when a model adds significant explanatory variables, as a result of which previously-published findings must be considered biased due to the models’ misspecification, and, more critically, different conclusions are reached.⁸

This rule may suffer one exception, though: if two journals have different readerships (targeting academics and business leaders respectively, for instance), then using some of the previously-published ideas and findings may be justified. This also applies to the gist of an article being developed in book form. Naturally, prior publications must be quoted, and copyright laws abided by. Finally, similar research studies may be published in publications from different academic fields, such as a Marketing/Economics vs a (non-applied) Psychology journal.

7. Thesis Directors-Doctoral Students Relationships

How can one be friends and colleagues with one’s thesis director? In practice, it’s a hard-to-strike balance. How can the subject be raised? What are the boundaries?

Thesis supervision is a professional activity, and as such, the rules that regulate how two people should work when one has authority over the other should be abided by. Both in terms of research work and career management more generally, the thesis director provides guidance to the doctoral

student. Extra-curricular activities involving both parties are by no means prohibited. However, while a friendly relationship may – and often does – arise, respective attitudes must remain professional, as excessive friendliness may be detrimental to the candid assessment of doctoral work and even generally to the quality of advice provided.

Conclusion

The questions asked by the panel of doctoral students involved in the preparation of this article reflect the general concerns of today's young researchers, not only in management science, but in academia at large.

Unethical research practices have been fuelled both by the “Publish or Perish” imperative that underpins academic careers and the unprecedented availability of published materials. This is why academic integrity issues should be considered a priority and these questions should receive clear answers to be shared with future researchers. Although not all situations – some of which are highly complex – can be covered, scholarly organizations, higher-education institutions, publishers, and editors-in-chief have launched many initiatives and established a number of guidelines to promote more transparent research and publishing processes as well as higher academic integrity standards. While those rules may appear constraining at times, especially as compared with prior practices, abiding by them can only be beneficial to research and the research profession in the long term.

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- 1 <https://publicationethics.org>
- 2 This could apply, for instance, to some methodologies involving a great many, hardly identifiable individuals (e.g. observing individual shopping paths in a supermarket).
- 3 When the same type of study is repeated with the same participant (as part of a class, for instance), it is not necessary to inform the participants each time the study is carried out. Participants may be informed once only, but they should have the option of stopping their participation without incurring any penalty (even if part of a class).
- 4 The term “editor-in-chief” includes guest and associate editors-in-chief who are responsible for the assessment process of some manuscripts.
- 5 <https://www.researchgate.net>
- 6 A thesis, however, is the work of its signatory, and the date of the defence may serve as evidence that this work was produced earlier than other works. It may not be quoted verbatim, nor can its ideas be used, without constituting a case of plagiarism.

7 Plagiarism rules, we may add, also apply to translations of a published text.
8 This may be done to correct previously-published works or to justify the contribution of a new publication.