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# Plagiarism, Misrepresentation, and Exploitation by Established Professionals: Power and Tactics

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## Abstract

Many academics and other professionals are implicated in plagiarism, misrepresentation, and exploitation, yet research about this is limited compared to the large body of research on student cheating. In what can be called competitive plagiarism, academics, judges, politicians, journalists, and others use the words and ideas of others without adequate acknowledgment. Misrepresentation occurs when professionals inflate or manufacture their credentials and achievements in curricula vitae, job applications, and media releases. Intellectual exploitation involves taking credit for the work of others in a routine fashion. Examples include ghostwriting and managers taking credit for the writings and ideas of subordinates. This sort of exploitation fits the normal definitions of plagiarism but this label is seldom applied; it can be called institutionalized plagiarism.

Understanding the persistence of intellectual exploitation can be understood by examining the tactics commonly used by plagiarizers to reduce outrage over their actions. These include cover-up, devaluation, reinterpretation, official

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channels, intimidation, and rewards. Powerful plagiarizers have access to most or all of these techniques, whereas student plagiarizers usually can use only cover-up and reinterpretation. The existence of institutionalized plagiarism depends on a lack of questioning of exploitative systems.

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## Introduction

Most of the extensive research on plagiarism concerns students. Yet plagiarism can also occur after students graduate or obtain academic positions. There are numerous documented cases of plagiarism by established academics as well as by other professionals, many of whom have university degrees and are supposed to know better. Though cases are sometimes reported in the media or academic journals, there is hardly any systematic research into the levels and significance of plagiarism by established professionals. Therefore, the most that can be done initially is to describe some of the many types of problems and responses to them.

Accepted integrity principles in scholarship and in intellectual work more generally, outside academia, include honesty, transparency, fairness, and accurate representation. Honesty involves reporting findings accurately and seeking to tell the truth at all times. Transparency, a related concept, refers to being open about dealings, for example, fully reporting research methods and potential conflicts of interest. Fairness to collaborators means giving them appropriate credit via co-authorship or acknowledgments; fairness to prior scholars can be provided by giving suitable citations. Accurate representation includes appropriately recognizing one's own accomplishments in research, teaching, and administration. This all may seem straightforward, but many standard practices actually encourage violations of these principles.

Integrity shortcomings among established professionals can be classified into three types: plagiarism, misrepresentation, and exploitation, though there are many overlaps between these. In this categorization, "plagiarism" refers to competitive plagiarism, in which a professional uses ideas from someone else in violation of the norms of behavior in the field. For scholars, this means using words or ideas from other scholars without appropriate acknowledgment. It also includes plagiarism in other occupations, such as by judges, politicians, journalists, diplomats, and businesspeople.

The most well-known type of misrepresentation is fraud, such as altering or manufacturing data. Misrepresentation also includes practices such as padding curricula vitae with accomplishments that are invented or overstated and claiming nonexistent degrees or degrees from nonaccredited institutions. Then there is hyperbole in claims made in job, promotion, and grant applications and in media releases about discoveries, as in the claims frequently heard about contributing to a cure for cancer. Several types of misrepresentation appear to be commonplace in many organizations and occupations, yet they are hardly ever stigmatized with the label "fraud."

The third category of integrity shortcoming can be called exploitation. Examples are taking credit for the work of students (as in honorary authorship), ghostwriting,

and bosses or leaders taking credit for the work of subordinates. Exploitation also can be called institutionalized plagiarism, because it satisfies all the normal characteristics of plagiarism, yet rarely is seen as problematical in the same way as student cheating. When a university president gives a speech written by a staffer, without giving acknowledgment to the author, this is seldom called plagiarism.

Understanding the existence and perpetuation of these integrity violations can usefully be addressed through studying common tactics used by perpetrators: cover-up, denigration of opponents or targets, explanations, formal procedures, intimidation, and rewards. These sorts of tactics are potentially involved in all integrity matters, but the full gamut of tactics is more likely to be observed when perpetrators are powerful.

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## Competitive Plagiarism

The following statement appeared in the preface to a book:

An earlier version of the first five chapters, which I had sent to several professional colleagues for their critical comments some years ago, was published without my knowledge or consent by one of them in a book of his own. (Parenti 1978, p. x)

Some established scholars use subtle or brazen techniques to take unfair advantage of the work of others (Mallon 1989). In the category of competitive plagiarism, others working in the same field are common targets. For example, a senior scholar may be invited to referee a paper and, noticing an original idea in it, write a paper using the idea and, using connections, get it published before the author of the paper being refereed – especially if this senior scholar recommends rejection of the plagiarized paper. Similar sorts of plagiarism of ideas can occur via casual conversations, seminars, and informal briefings. Stories circulate about such practices and about scholars to avoid, but there is little systematic evidence. Most of those targeted by such techniques do not make a fuss, especially if they remain in the same field as the offending senior scholar. Marek Wronski, a Polish medical researcher, has exposed a large number of scholars in Europe for copying the work of others in their theses and publications, reporting on his findings in a long-running monthly column in the Polish magazine *Academic Forum* (some English translations are available at <http://www.bmartin.cc/dissent/documents/Wronski/>). Similarly, Debora Weber-Wulff (2014) has documented dissertation plagiarism in Germany, with many academics and politicians implicated.

Competitive plagiarism also occurs in other professions and occasionally leads to exposés. For example, judges may use unattributed text in their written judgments, journalists may copy the work of others, and businesses produce texts and other materials based on uncited sources. Politicians in their speeches may draw on the writings or speeches of others, including other politicians, and sometimes are called to task for their unacknowledged borrowings.

Competitive plagiarism among established professionals is probably more common than generally recognized, but also easier to deal with, especially when word-for-word copying is involved, because this is ever easier to detect due to the availability of improved software for digitizing publications and text-matching, with plagiarism via translation of texts in other languages providing a set of special challenges (Sousa-Silva 2014). Even a small incidence of plagiarism can have damaging consequences, because scholars become hesitant to share their ideas for fear they will be exploited by others. Plagiarism by professionals therefore deserves greater attention.

It should be noted that some plagiarism of ideas happens unconsciously: a researcher hears about a new concept, evidence, or approach and later forgets the source of the idea, thinking it is original, something called cryptomnesia. This raises the question of how often ideas are truly original: many ideas developed by scholars are the product of an accumulation of influences from reading, seminars, observations, discussions, and casual conversations. Documenting and properly acknowledging all these influences would be an enormous and perhaps impossible task. Word-for-word plagiarism is simpler to detect and, as a violation of integrity, less problematical.

Authors of books often provide detailed acknowledgments to those who have helped them in various ways. On the other hand, many authors of journal articles do not attempt to offer such acknowledgments beyond what is implied by formal citations. This can be confirmed by examining articles in refereed journals and noting that many authors do not acknowledge the comments of reviewers or anyone else.

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## Misrepresentation

Some academics misrepresent their achievements, for example, their stature in the field, their degrees, their publications, their teaching performance, their workload, and their contributions to governance. A key location for such misrepresentations is the curriculum vitae, which is supposed to be a fair account of a person's achievements. Some CVs list degrees that were not obtained (Attewell and Domina 2011), degrees that only involved payment of a fee, but presented as legitimate (Brown 2006), or degrees as conferred that are only pending. In a list of publications, the scholar may be incorrectly listed as first author; sometimes co-authors are omitted entirely. Publications are sometimes said to be "in press" when they have only been submitted. In many fields, books are considered significant contributions; misrepresentation can occur by listing edited books as authored books or listing article-length reports as books. A CV may suggest that a person is responsible for bringing in research grants, when actually others did most of the work; sometimes non-existent grants are listed. In the text in CVs, individuals can exaggerate the significance of their research accomplishments, their contributions to course design, and their teaching experience. For example, a few guest lectures might be made to appear as running an entire course. It is common for poor teacher evaluations to be

omitted; more serious is when evaluation figures are altered. Concerning administrative duties, routine committee membership may be presented as a significant contribution to leadership, short-term administrative positions presented as ongoing or substantive, and credit taken for the administrative accomplishments of others.

Another type of misrepresentation is hyping of research findings. Such exaggerations are common in grant applications and media releases.

Some sorts of misrepresentation are more serious than others. Falsely claiming a degree is more serious than failing to list co-authors of a published paper. Some sorts of misrepresentation are easier to detect than others: details of publications can be checked by consulting journals, whereas obscure conference publications may be hard to track down. Degrees can be verified through requesting diplomas and by contacting conferring institutions. However, selection committees and grant committees often do not have the resources or time to check details in applications, so a great deal of misrepresentation escapes detection. A few well-known intellectuals, for example, Bruno Bettelheim, have fashioned careers based on extensive misrepresentation, only to be exposed much later (Pollak 1996).

Another important factor is that few individuals have an objective perspective on their own accomplishments. When co-authors evaluate their contributions to a research paper, each one is more acutely aware of their own efforts and input than of their co-author's, so each of several co-authors may say they did more than half the work. The same sorts of misperceptions occur in shared teaching.

In administrative tasks, contributions are even harder to evaluate, so exaggerations can develop and persist with little possibility for verification. An independent investigator might ask each member of a committee for an assessment of contributions and attempt some sort of reconciliation of differences in perception, but such investigations are rare. Some academics believe sincerely that they have made important administrative contributions while their colleagues see something quite different, which may include serious shortcomings or even abuses. Misrepresentations thus can result from self-deception, often resulting from confirmation bias based on an initial self-exaggerating perception. Those in senior management positions are especially susceptible to this, because subordinates, in order to please their superiors, may not offer feedback to correct delusions and moreover may even feed such beliefs through false flattery (Trivers 2011).

A few forms of misrepresentation, such as fake degrees, are stigmatized and if exposed can seriously damage an academic's career. Other forms, however, such as exaggerating contributions to publications, grants, supervision, teaching, and governance, are commonplace. Yet misrepresentation can advance an academic's career by giving a slight but crucial edge in applications for jobs, promotions, and grants. Applicants may realize that being scrupulously honest can undercut their prospects and hence may join in subtly exaggerating their achievements in order to level the playing field.

Penalties for lower-level misrepresentation are rare, going by the lack of publicized examples. Although hyping the significance of research findings is routine, scholars are not often castigated for this, except when they work in controversial fields where they are subject to scrutiny by opponents.

In summary, academic integrity includes giving a fair presentation of one's scholarly achievements, but various forms of low-level misrepresentation are common and seldom stigmatized, much less penalized. A few types of misrepresentation – notably altering or manufacturing data – are treated as major violations and called fraud, while the garden-variety forms of misrepresentation usually escape censure (Martin 1992). Colleagues might notice them but say nothing.

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## Exploitation

Intellectual exploitation occurs when systems of work routinely lead to misallocation of credit (Martin 1994). Exploitation involves institutionalization of what would elsewhere be called plagiarism. In many types of exploitation, those who are exploited may willingly enter the arrangements or simply acquiesce because they do not know any better.

Some scholars take credit for the work of others through arrangements that are, in some places, standard practice. Common targets include students, research assistants, and spouses, particularly wives (Martin 2013). Research students are prime victims, because they are subordinate to their supervisors and are doing publishable or near-publishable work. A supervisor may simply expect to be a co-author of papers while having done little or none of the work and may even claim sole authorship of a student's work (Witton 1973). For example, a supervisor, without informing the student, may give talks at conferences and submit articles to journals or even publish a student's thesis as their own book. In some places, this would be seen as a serious ethical violation (and such practices would be seen as competitive plagiarism), but in others it is standard practice and students may be unaware, not care, grudgingly acquiesce, or treat this as a necessary prelude to their own academic advancement, looking forward to exploiting their own students.

Some senior scholars fund teams of students and assistants who collect references, write drafts of text, check facts, and proofread text, while the scholars assert sole authorship (Russell 2007). In other cases, textbooks are written by staff paid by publishers, and suitably positioned academics are recruited to be the official authors (Coser et al. 1982; McCrostie 2009).

In some labs, the team leader brings in the money for equipment, salaries, and scholarships and in turn expects to be a co-author of most or all papers written, regardless of any contribution to or even familiarity with the work. This practice is widespread despite the efforts of some editors to insist on prerequisites for co-authorship. Targets for exploitation in such circumstances include students, research assistants, postdoctoral fellows, and sometimes even fairly senior scientists. This sort of exploitation is perpetuated by expectations of grant bodies: the chief scientist in applications needs to demonstrate extraordinary productivity. Those who are scrupulously honest and renounce co-authorship when it is not warranted may jeopardize their prospects for grants and thus imperil the careers of others on their teams.

Spouses, especially wives, can be victims of exploitation, and often they do this willingly. In what has been called the "two-person career," one partner in a marriage has a position and reputation, while the other partner contributes in many invisible ways (Papanek 1973). This includes not only household support tasks of cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing but also significant intellectual contributions including developing research ideas, collecting data, finding references, writing sections of papers, revising drafts, and proofreading. The scale of contributions would in other circumstances warrant co-authorship, but one or both partners avoid such recognition in order to serve the advancement of one of them (Fowlkes 1980; Fuegi 1994; Spender 1989, pp. 140–194). For example, Aurelia Plath in her book *Letters Home*

writes movingly of having done all the reading and note-taking for her husband's book, then having written the first draft, and at last having put the manuscript into "final form" for the printer. At some point in this process Otto Plath revised a bit and inserted a few notes — including adding his name on the title page as sole author, a regrettably not uncommon practice. (Morgan 1977, p. 192)

## Ghostwriting

A special form of institutionalized plagiarism goes by the name of ghostwriting, which typically involves an anonymous or under-credited author, called a ghostwriter or ghost, who writes much or all of a work, with most or all of the credit going to someone else. When celebrities, such as sports or movie stars, publish their autobiographies, these are often actually written by ghostwriters who are paid to write or extensively rewrite and edit the text. A ghostwriter might rely on interviews with the nominal author, or collect information from a range of sources, and then prepare a text that sounds as if it had been written by the celebrity. There are even manuals about making a career out of ghostwriting (Shaw 1991); their existence attests to this being an accepted practice.

In some cases, ghosts receive partial credit. For example, Alex Haley was credited with assisting in the writing of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (X with Haley, 1965). In other cases, the contribution of the ghost is included in the acknowledgments but not in the author line or omitted entirely. Occasionally, the nominal author may comment publicly that they have yet to read their own autobiography. If anything less than full credit is provided, the ghostwriter is, according to standard definitions, being plagiarized, even when the ghost takes the initiative in the arrangement.

However, few ghosts protest about lack of credit. They usually treat the arrangement as contractual and consider payment for services rendered as proper compensation. Because this is a mutually agreed process, ghostwriting can be considered institutionalized.

Ghostwriting can also occur in scholarly contexts, for example, when supervisors write parts of the theses of their research students and when editors extensively

rewrite submissions by authors (Bedeian 1996a, b). In these sorts of circumstances, the ghostwriters do not seek payment: the success of the recipients of their largesse is the reward.

Some syndicated newspaper columnists make enough money to be able to use ghostwriters for some or most of their columns. This can lead to the hypocritical phenomenon of columnists fulminating against a politician who in making a speech used unattributed text from another politician, in which the column is written by someone else.

Political speechwriters are another type of ghostwriter, so institutionalized that there are books about their important role (Schlesinger 2008). Few famous speeches are attributed to the person who wrote them. For example, US President Eisenhower's famous farewell address, in which he warned about the power of the military-industrial complex, is seldom noted as having been written by Ralph Williams and Malcolm Moos. Sometimes ghostwriters themselves plagiarize, resulting in a curious assignment of blame. When in the 1980s US Senator Joseph Biden was exposed for using the words of Robert Kennedy and Neil Kinnock without attribution, few commented that it was Biden's speechwriter who used the words, which in turn were written not by Kennedy and Kinnock but by their speechwriters, who were not credited.

Many judges use text from the submissions from lawyers on behalf of plaintiffs or defendants – usually the party that prevails – without attribution (Richmond 2014). Some lawyers see the adoption of text from their briefs in this way as a sign of success, so this sort of plagiarism might be considered a form of attempted tacit ghostwriting.

Although ghostwriting is sometimes justified as legitimate because the parties involved agree to it, this is never accepted as justification for undergraduate students purchasing essays from a term-paper service. Ghostwriting can also be defended on the grounds that everyone knows that it is occurring. Those familiar with the scene recognize that few celebrities write their autobiographies and that few politicians write their speeches, but nonetheless many people are misled. If proper credit were given, it would undermine the credibility of the alleged author. For example, a politician would lose face for beginning a speech by saying "I'm now going to read a speech written by my staffer Alice Author, adding occasional extemporaneous comments of my own." Politicians only occasionally mention the role of speechwriters, much less give detailed explanations of the speechwriting process, in forums where constituents are reading or listening. If they did, they would puncture a widespread illusion, and other politicians would find this unwelcome. Newspapers are more likely to publish articles nominally written by politicians than by their political staffers, so there is an incentive to maintain the illusion of politician authorship.

Another type of ghostwriting occurs regularly in science and is especially common in biomedicine. Pharmaceutical companies fund research by their own scientists, who write articles based on the findings. To gain greater credibility, the marketing units of the companies seek to find academic scientists who will agree to be listed as the authors of these articles. The resulting articles may have one or

multiple authors, in which the named academic authors may have had little or no role in the research – sometimes only reading the article or making minor changes – while some or all of the pharmaceutical company researchers are not listed at all. In this way, the company benefits because the papers are seen as more independent and the academic ghost authors benefit by gaining credit for more papers. Many such ghostwritten papers are published in top journals in the field and are part of organized campaigns to promote particular drugs. Sometimes the major articles are accompanied by numerous semi-ghostwritten articles in lesser journals, providing a phalanx of apparently credible findings. Some medical journal editors have made efforts to curb this practice, but their efforts are hampered by the journals' dependence on income from the companies, via advertisements in the journals and massive purchases of reprints that are used to promote drugs to doctors (Angell 2005; Goldacre 2012; Logdberg 2011; Sismondo 2009).

A parallel form of informal ghostwriting occurs when journalists write articles reproducing text from media releases and other documents, most commonly from governments and companies, without acknowledging the source. Although no money changes hands, this arrangement serves both parties: journalists produce stories without needing to do much work, while public relations units get their message to the public via a seemingly independent source.

## **Bureaucratic Plagiarism**

In many organizations, it is routine practice for subordinates to write speeches, reports, articles, slideshows, and other outputs and for their superiors to take formal credit for the work. For example, in government departments, junior employees may do most of the work in researching, drafting, checking, and polishing a report on a policy issue, while a more senior employee is listed as responsible. The nominal author may have made little or no contribution to the work. Sometimes the actual authors are listed, but in small print or as acknowledgments. This sort of practice has been called "bureaucratic plagiarism" (Moodie 2006).

Bureaucracies are organizational systems based on hierarchy and a division of labor, in which workers are interchangeable cogs. The bureaucratic form is found throughout modern societies, including in government departments, corporations, churches, trade unions, and environmental groups. Universities are partly bureaucratic, coexisting with professional and collegial systems.

Bureaucratic systems are set up so that the work of employees serves the functions of the organization as a whole, which is often tied to the patron of the organization. In practice, junior employees often are exploited by their managers. Institutionalized plagiarism is not mandated by the bureaucratic form, but it becomes easy and may be seen as normal.

Outcomes of bureaucratic plagiarism include media releases, policy documents, laws, research reports, public statements, speeches, and articles in newspapers, magazines, and trade journals. It is rare for this sort of plagiarism to be questioned.

The double standard involved is most acute within universities, where plagiarism by students is castigated. When university presidents issue public statements or give speeches that have been written by their staff, there is a potential clash with the ethos of doing one's own work: students are not allowed to have their assignments written by paid staff.

Bureaucratic plagiarism can be considered a type of ghostwriting and, like ghostwriting, usually all involved acquiesce in the arrangements. Subordinates are paid for their work or can be satisfied by their efforts having a public impact. Furthermore, the arrangements are so standard that within relevant parts of organizations, "everyone knows" who is actually doing the work. Subordinates who do good work can expect to receive bonuses, promotions, or good references. When this sort of internal reward is not forthcoming, they may become disgruntled with their boss or perhaps with the system as a whole, but few ever speak out about the exploitative practices.

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### **Plagiarism Tactics**

To better understand the dynamics of different sorts of plagiarism, misrepresentation, and exploitation, it is useful to examine tactics commonly used by perpetrators and their opponents. When powerful individuals or groups do things that might cause offense to others, they commonly use one or more of the following methods to reduce outrage (Martin 2007):

1. Cover up the action;
2. Devalue the target;
3. Reinterpret the action by lying, minimizing consequences, blaming others, or reframing the action in a positive way;
4. Use official channels that give an appearance of justice; and
5. Intimidate or reward critics.

These methods are used in relation to a wide variety of unjust actions, including sexual harassment, massacres, and torture, so it is not surprising that they also frequently occur in struggles over plagiarism and other violations of integrity (Martin 2008).

Consider the example of a senior academic who has used ideas provided by a junior, untenured colleague. The first method of reducing outrage is to hide the copying: if no one knows about it, then of course no one can be outraged. The second method is to denigrate or discredit the junior colleague, by pointing to intellectual shortcomings or character defects. The senior academic might hint that the junior colleague is a poor scholar, a slack teacher, or a sexual predator. If the junior colleague is seen as deficient, then any injustice to this colleague will be seen as less serious.

The method of reinterpretation has several facets. The senior academic might falsely claim that they had the idea first, before reading the junior colleague's draft

paper (reinterpretation by lying). They might say using the idea is not a big deal (reinterpretation by minimizing consequences). They might say a co-author was responsible for adding the idea to their paper (reinterpretation by blaming). Or they might say it is standard practice, because ideas like this are common currency (reinterpretation by framing).

If the junior colleague puts in a formal complaint, the university procedures – few of which are set up with plagiarism of ideas by senior academics in mind – may well find the complaint unsubstantiated or impose only a mild penalty, such as a verbal warning. Finally, the senior academic might threaten, explicitly or implicitly, the junior academic with denial of tenure if the matter is taken further or offer support for tenure if it is dropped. Craig Thompson (1998) tells a story along these lines. After his work was used by a tenured colleague without acknowledgment, Thompson did not make a formal complaint, being warned by colleagues that the plagiarist had powerful friends and that the center where Thompson worked might be shut down.

Compare this to the situation of an undergraduate student who intentionally plagiarizes. The student usually has only two methods to reduce outrage. The first is cover-up: hiding or disguising the plagiarism so it is not discovered. The second is reinterpretation, for example, saying they didn't understand what was required or didn't think it was significant. Few students have the capacity to devalue their teachers, use official procedures to their advantage, or threaten or reward academics.

Looking at plagiarism in the light of methods that can be used to reduce outrage, the fundamental difference between plagiarism by students and by established professionals is the power of the perpetrators. Those with more power are better able to thwart exposure and avoid penalties.

Those who wish to challenge plagiarism, especially when it seems to involve serious attempts to cheat, have five corresponding methods for increasing outrage:

1. Expose the action;
2. Validate the target;
3. Interpret the action as an injustice;
4. Avoid official channels; instead, mobilize support; and
5. Resist intimidation and rewards.

The “target” in this scenario is the person whose work is plagiarized. In the case of student plagiarism, in which the teacher and/or institution has far more power than the student, usually the only relevant methods are exposing the plagiarism and interpreting it as inappropriate, perhaps as cheating, depending on the context. On the other hand, when the perpetrator is a powerful academic, who may be able to denigrate and threaten challengers, publicity is often the only effective way of bringing them to account (Martin 2008).

Many who try to challenge plagiarism learn the hard way about the limits of official channels. Neal Bowers (1997), whose poetry was plagiarized by a mysterious writer, has described his frustration with journal editors, some of whom ran poems

under a false name even after Bowers supplied them with documentation of the plagiarism. Furthermore, many of Bowers' colleagues offered him no sympathy.

In cases of institutionalized plagiarism, those with greater power or money receive credit for the work of those with lesser status. In most cases, there is no challenge to the arrangements: ghostwriters, for example, are usually content with payment and may even defend their lack of formal recognition. When subordinates seek to gain greater credit or question the entire system, they can be met with various obstacles, including reinterpretations (e.g., that "this is the way it is done"), devaluation, and intimidation. A junior employee who insists on being named as author or contributing author to an organizational publication might be passed over for promotion or even terminated. Similarly, a research student who protests against honorary authorship conferred on a senior professor could be penalized by being given bad references or even undermined in their research.

There have been few open challenges to academic exploitation and more generally to institutionalized plagiarism, and the literature on this topic is correspondingly sparse (Martin 2013). To understand the tactics of challenging plagiarism, there is more material involving challenges to competitive plagiarism. The crucial step is to collect convincing evidence; usually this involves word-for-word plagiarism rather than plagiarism of ideas, which is harder to prove. This evidence might be provided to university or professional authorities but has a greater impact when made public, for example, published in academic journals, the mass media, or on social media sites. Openly publishing evidence avoids the outrage-reducing methods of devaluation, official channels, and intimidation that play a role when complaints are made inside institutions.

The implication of this assessment is that challenging misconduct by senior academics, professionals, managers, or others with power and prestige can be difficult, and the usual approach of making complaints through formal channels – for example, writing letters to university officials – has significant limitations, and leaves the complainant open to reprisals. Taking the evidence to wider audiences is often the only way to have an impact.

There is another phenomenon that complicates these struggles: false or malicious allegations of plagiarism or misconduct as a means of attack. Consider a common scenario: a senior professor takes credit for the work of a research student, giving talks and publishing papers based on the student's research. If the student complains, the professor may accuse the student of plagiarism.

Another use of false allegations is to discredit a competitor. High achievers, whose rising status is a threat to colleagues, are sometimes subject to allegations of misconduct. So are those who challenge groups with vested interests. For example, David Lewis, a microbiologist whose research showed the health hazards of treated sewage used as a fertilizer, was accused of scientific fraud as a method of discrediting him (Lewis 2014).

The implication here is that assessments of academic and professional misconduct need to take into account the wider context. Looking only at the claims made can sometimes be unfair because motivations and power differentials are left out of the picture. A minor mistake by a junior scholar might be subject to scrutiny and

penalties, whereas major abuses by senior scholars are never investigated. It is necessary to examine who is making claims, what they have to gain (if anything), and the wider context of practices, including systemic misrepresentation and exploitation. Official channels, such as grievance procedures and making complaints to editors and professional associations, often serve to protect powerful perpetrators because officials either refuse to act or look at evidence in a narrow way that obscures the role of power.

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## Conclusion

Most discussions of plagiarism focus on students, especially those still learning scholarly acknowledgment practices. In comparison, plagiarism by established academics and other professionals receives little attention. Furthermore, institutionalized ways of claiming credit for the work of subordinates, which fit usual definitions of plagiarism, are hardly ever called plagiarism. There is a disjunction between the strictures placed on students and an array of exploitative practices in academia and beyond that can best be explained by differences in power. It is possible to stigmatize student plagiarism because students have little power to resist, whereas established academics have more tools to avoid or resist challenges to their abuses and prerogatives.

A similar pattern occurs in the area of misrepresentation. Certain practices, especially manufacturing or altering data, are castigated as scientific fraud, whereas other types of misrepresentation, such as exaggeration on curricula vitae, grant applications, and media releases, are treated as normal.

Enforcing integrity norms can be unfair if undertaken in a selective manner. There is a danger in focusing on individual violations without understanding the wider context: an individual might well have transgressed norms, but penalties for this can be unfair if the norms themselves leave out systemic forms of misrepresentation and exploitation.

One possible implication of the existence of institutionalized plagiarism, misrepresentation, and exploitation is that education in scholarly integrity needs to include analysis of practices, power, and tactics. Students need to know how to give appropriate citations but also how to recognize when supervisors are taking unfair credit for the work of subordinates and why it is hard to challenge this sort of intellectual exploitation. Students also need to understand some of the tactics used by powerful exploiters and the risks in trying to challenge them.

There is no easy road to transforming exploitative practices and systems. Greater understanding of how these systems work is a good basis for making strategic interventions toward fairer systems.

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