

Publication Ethics

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Publication Ethics

- Ethics derives from the Greek word **Ethos**, which translates as **Character**
- **Scientific ethics**: an agreed upon set of rules and standards governing the conduct (character) of practicing scientists.
- As the ultimate goal of science is to advance the field by publication of new knowledge, scientific ethics essentially = **publication ethics**
- Being ethical is simply about having a **good character** and monitoring your thoughts and actions so that you display this good character in all your scientific endeavors

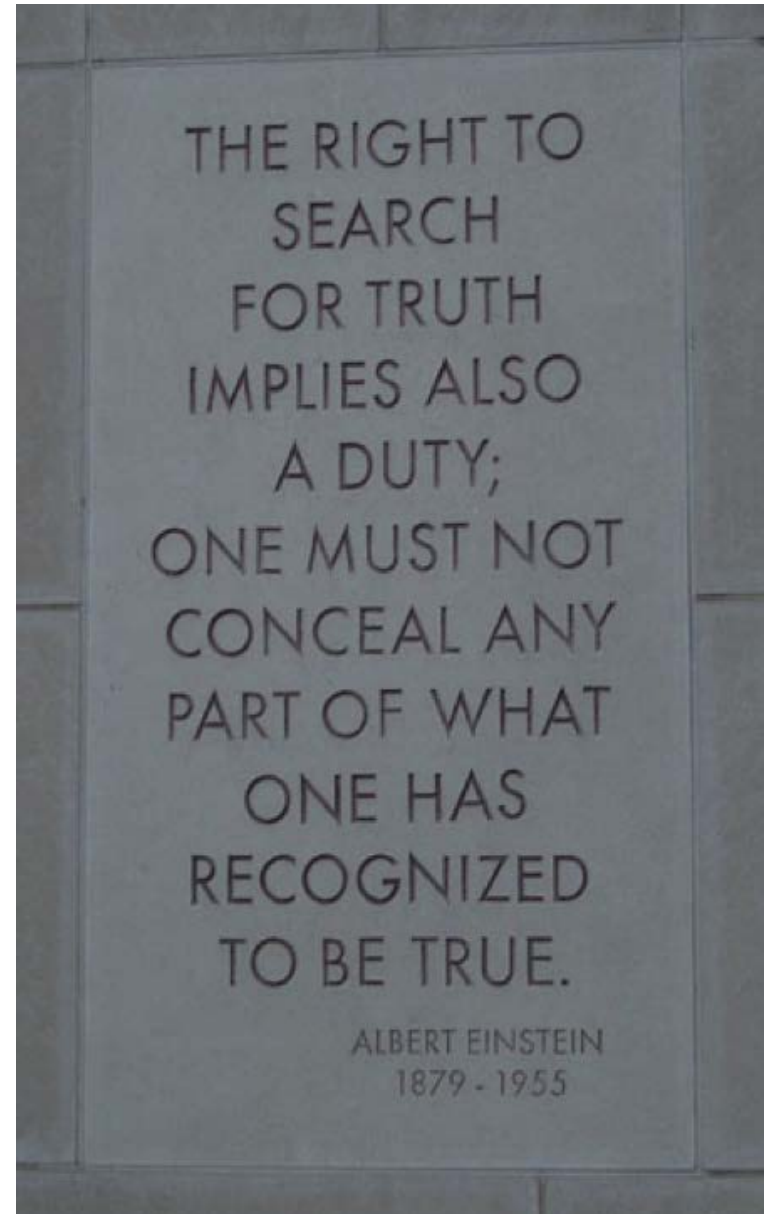
Research Misconduct

As defined by the US government: “fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.” = **Lapses in scientific ethics.**

To Ponder

Einstein also said: “not only do we have the right to search for the truth; we have a duty to reveal wrongdoing.”

That’s what being an ethical editor, reviewer, author, and reader is all about

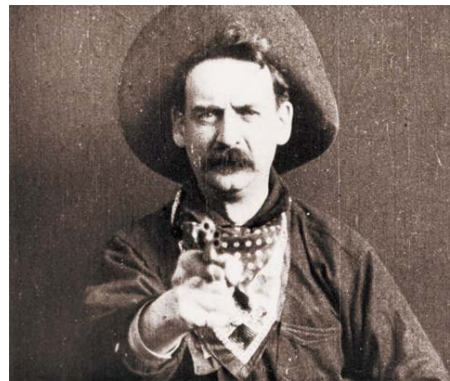


Case Studies

What would you do if you were one of the protagonists in the following situations?



Good guy



Bad guy

Case Study

Conflict of Interest?

- A senior scientist is asked to review a manuscript by a competing junior investigator for a high-impact journal. He has a similar manuscript that he is working on, and his postdoc recently heard the junior investigator present the data for the manuscript at a scientific conference.
- Although agreeing to review within two weeks, he fails to do so, and he delays his review for an additional two weeks, despite promising the editorial office on two occasions after the deadline passed that he would review within a “couple of days.” In his review, he recommends major revision and suggests that the authors conduct several more experiments that will take many months to complete. The editor agrees with this recommendation and makes the decision of major revision, although the other reviewer recommended only minor revision.
- The senior investigator and his postdoc then submits their work to another high-impact journal, and it appears online as a preprint 2 months later; they fail to cite the work of the junior investigator, although they were well aware of it.

Case Study: 4 Questions

What would you do?

1. What ethical breaches occurred?
2. Should the junior scientist take some sort of action?
3. If so, is the editor required to take action? Could the editor have done anything differently during the review/decision process?
4. Did the senior investigator do anything inappropriate, and is any action by him now required?

The Importance of Ethical Peer Review: 3 Essential Points

1. Peer review started in **1731**: Royal Society of Edinburgh published “Medical Essays and Observations”
2. Peer review = “A form of deliberation involving an **exchange of judgements** about the **appropriateness of methods** and the **strengths of the author’s inferences.**”
3. Peer reviewers = those “**most versed in the matters**”

Case Study Plagiarism?

- A postdoc leaves the laboratory and takes a full-time teaching position because her NIH postdoctoral fellowship has ended and the PI of the lab has no other funding to support her. Because of her heavy teaching load, she has not been able to find the time to write up her manuscript. When she was in the lab, she designed the fellowship project, wrote the NRSA proposal to support it, and worked on the project for 3 years, of course with her PI's advice and guidance.
- Two years after leaving the lab, her paper appears in a prestigious journal, and it consists solely of the data that she collected, but her name is neither listed as an author nor in the acknowledgements. The paper has four authors: the first author is a graduate student who joined the lab just after she left to take the teaching position.
- The next two authors are also graduate students, one of whom is a co-first author, who were in the lab concurrently with her but did not participate in her research. The last author is the PI of the lab. On submission of the manuscript, all authors clicked the agreed box, stating that they made substantial contributions to the manuscript to justify authorship.

Case Study: 5 Questions

What would you do?

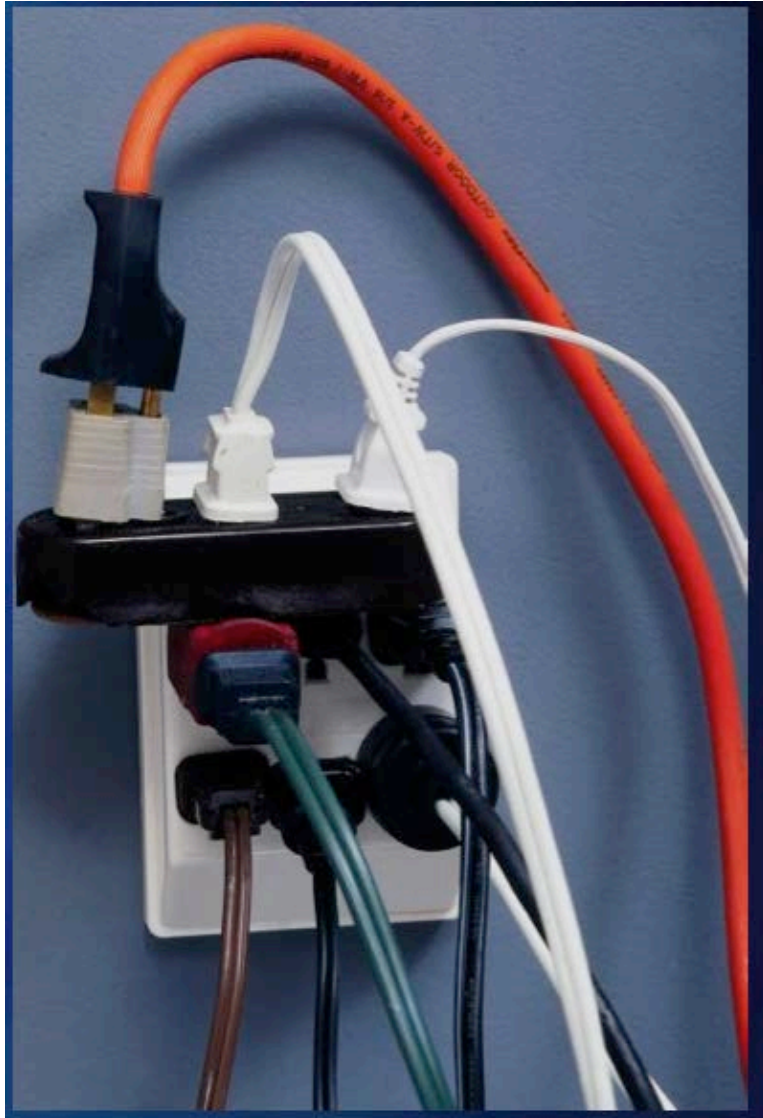
1. What ethical breeches occurred?
2. What should the postdoc now do? Does she have any responsibility for the current situation?
3. What was the PI's responsibility, and does he/she now need to take corrective action?
4. Did the graduate students who agreed to be authors act appropriately?
5. Does writing alone, justify authorship?

Plagiarism Includes Copying Text from Others, or Reusing Text You Previously Published

BE AWARE: the use of plagiarism checkers by journals (and other interested parties) is now very common

**One Further Scenario to
Consider: Data Manipulation
or Manufacture**

Do You Feel Overworked?

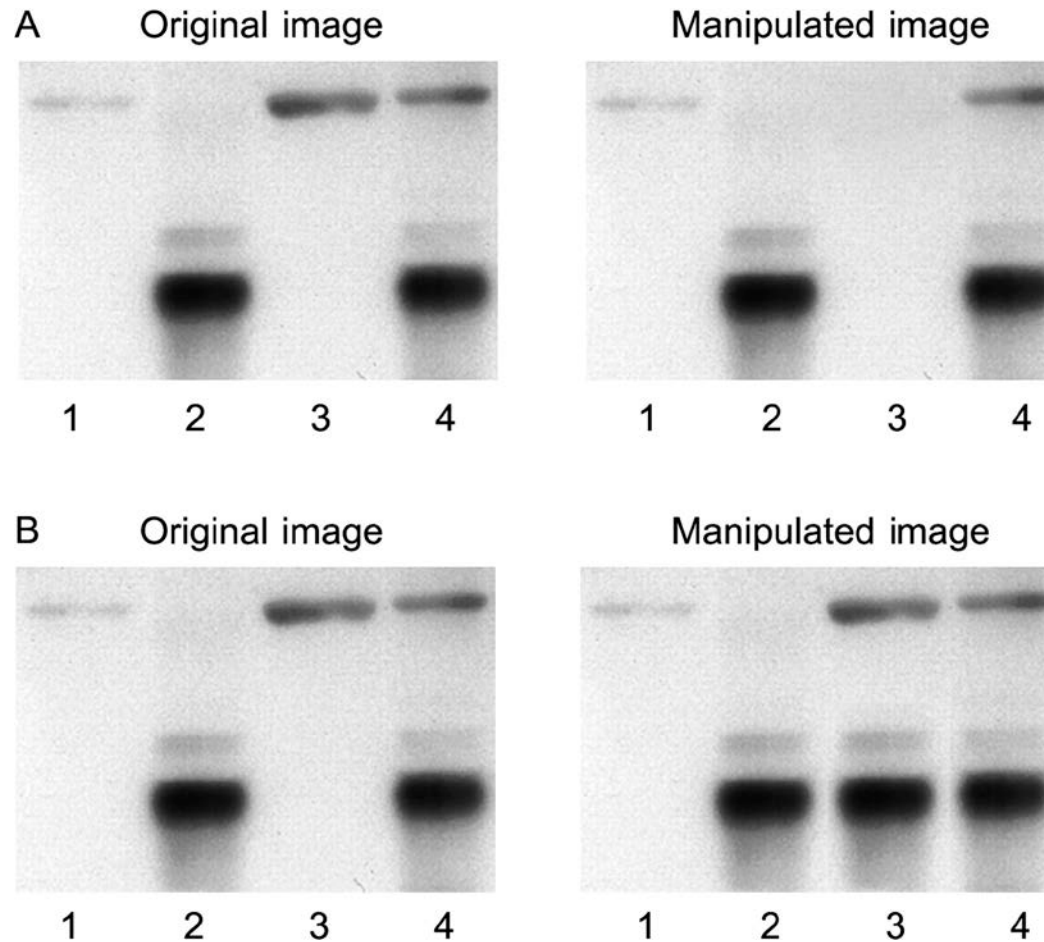


Should you cut corners?

Doing so is likely to give you a BIG headache

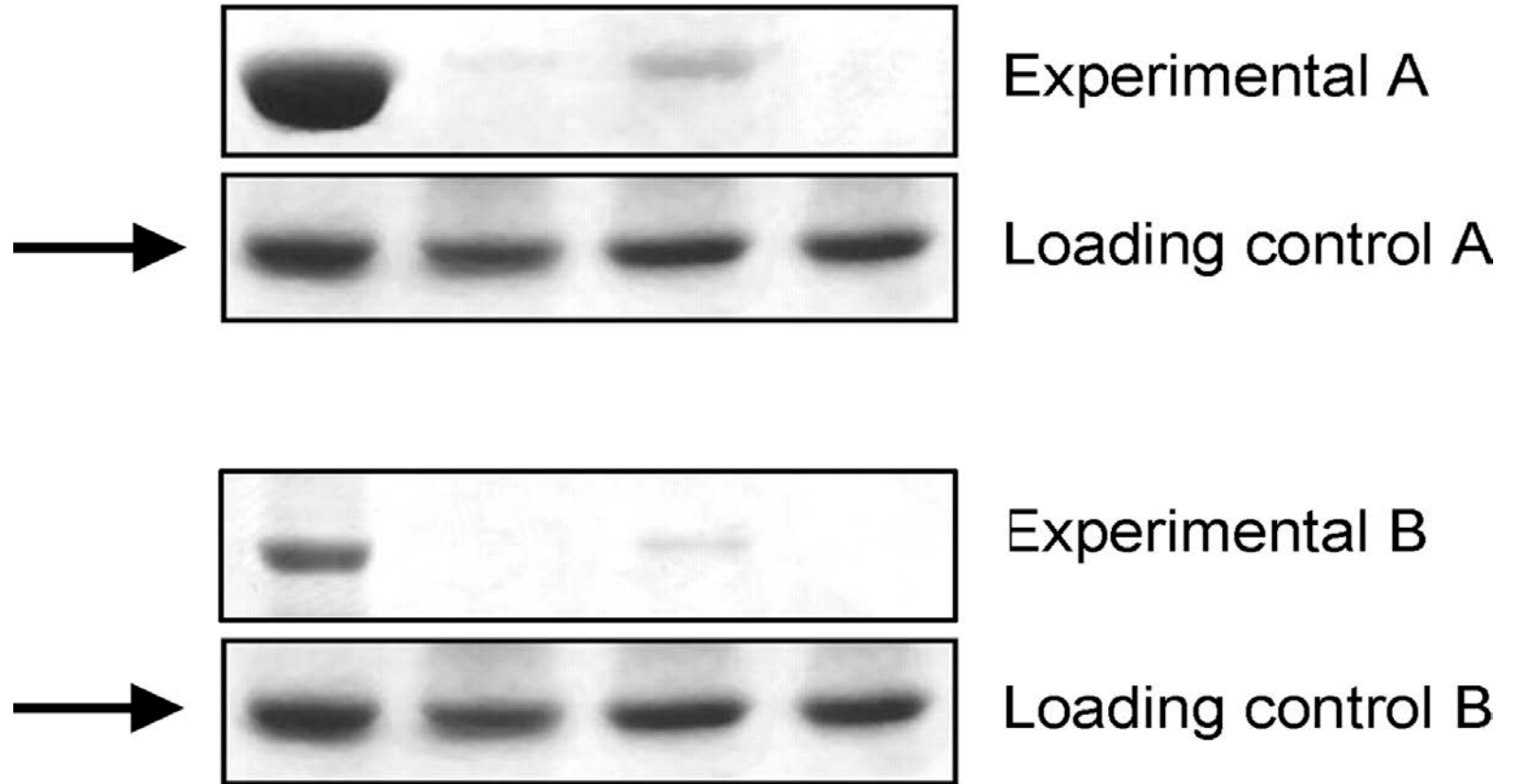
Some egregious examples

Gross Manipulation of Blots



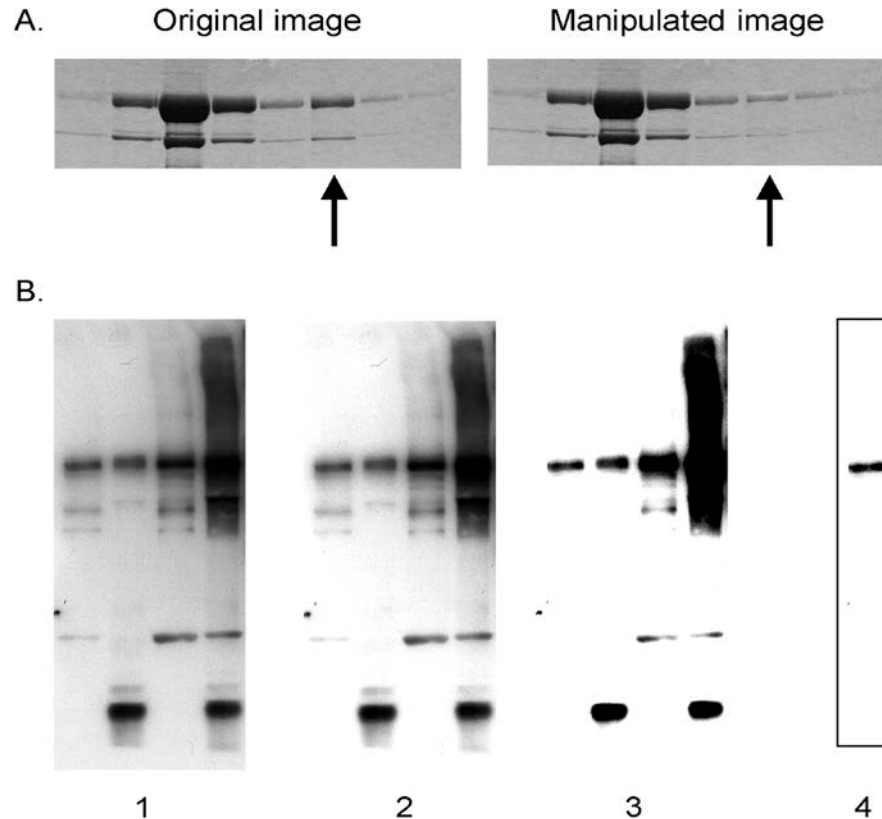
Rossner M , Yamada K M J Cell Biol 2004;166:11-15

Gross Manipulation of Blots



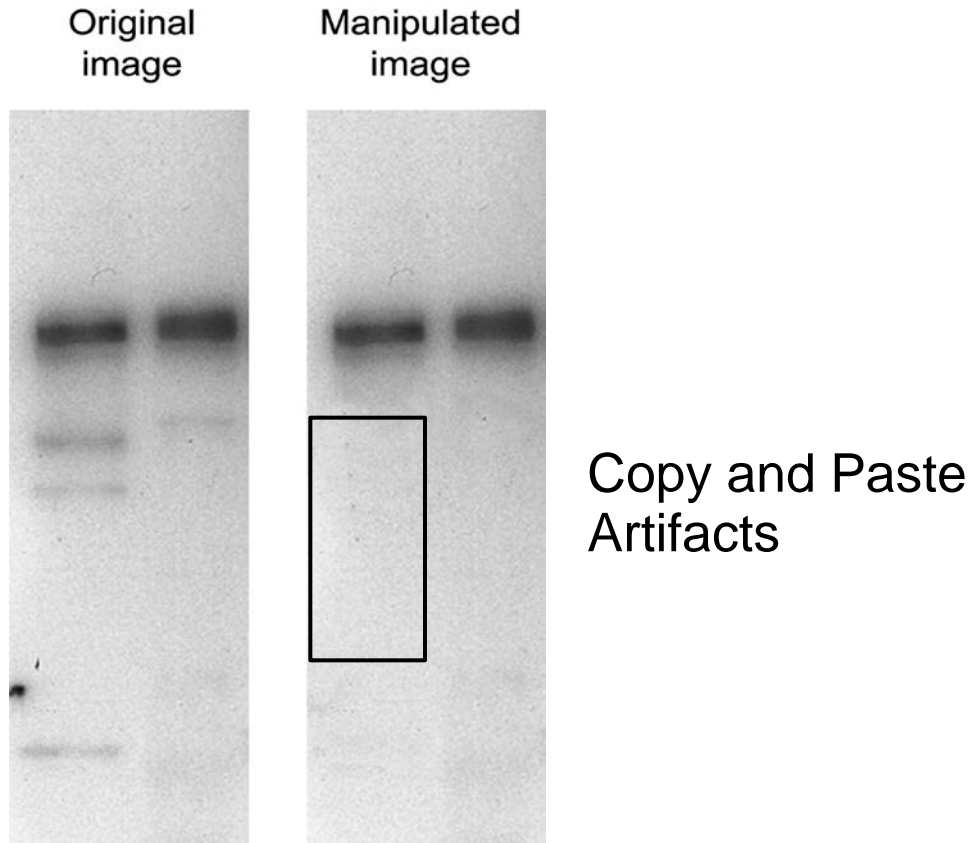
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Manipulation of Blots: Selective Brightness and Contrast Adjustments



Rossner M , Yamada K M J Cell Biol 2004;166:11-15

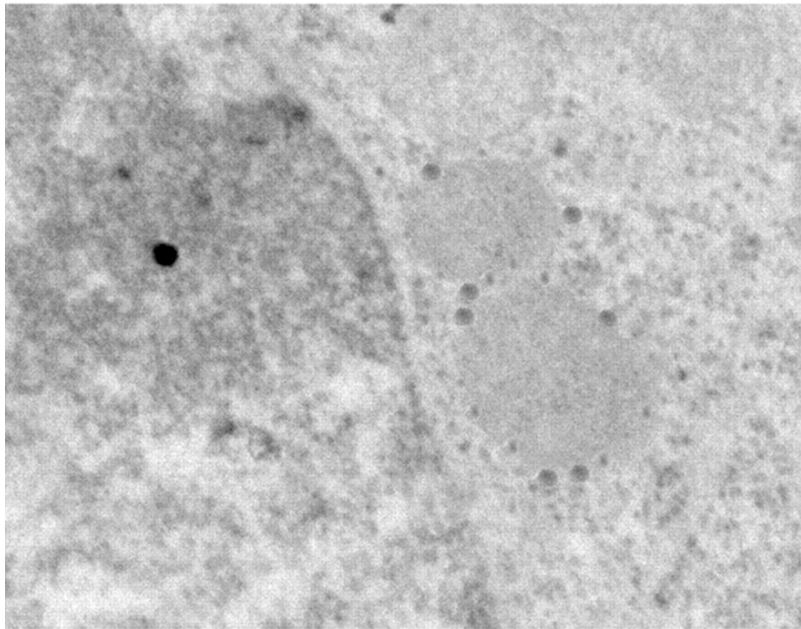
Manipulation of Blots: “Cleaning Up Background”



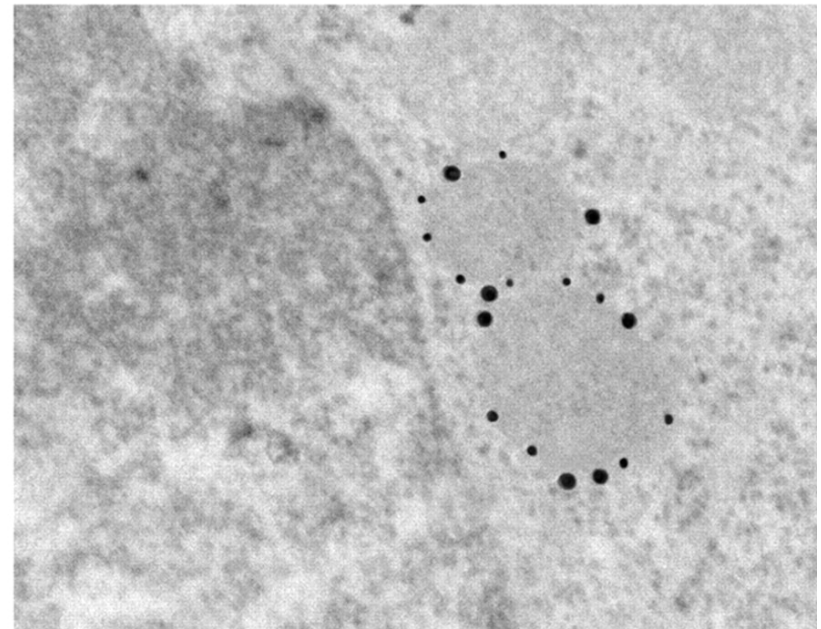
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Misrepresentation of Immunogold Data

Original image



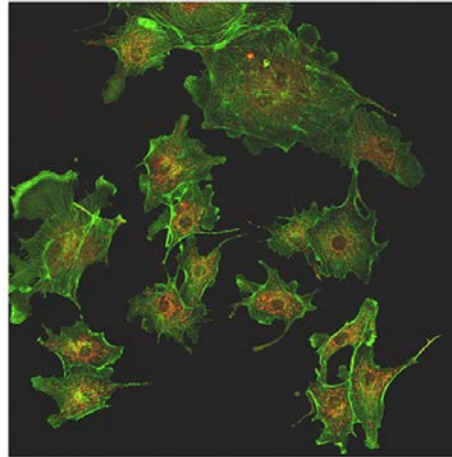
Manipulated image



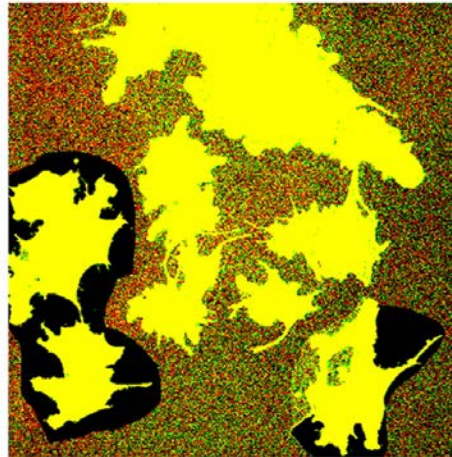
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Misrepresentation of Image Data

Manipulated
image



Manipulation
revealed
by contrast
adjustment

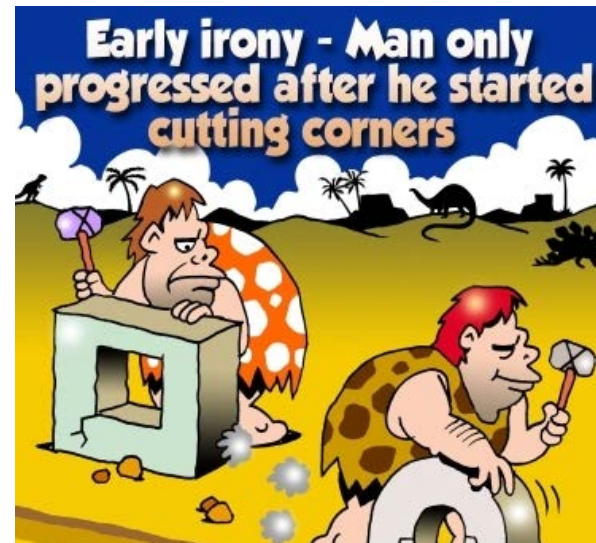


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The Figures ARE the Results!

The figures don't just represent the results

Don't cut corners



Resources

Committee on Publication Ethics

COPE: <http://publicationethics.org/about>

- **COPE** is a charity registered in the UK. It is concerned with the integrity of peer-reviewed publications. It was established in 1997 but now has over 5200 members worldwide. Membership is open to editors of academic journals but other individuals who are interested in publication ethics may become associate members.
- Several major publishers (including Elsevier, Wiley–Blackwell, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Palgrave Macmillan, and Wolters Kluwer) have signed up their journals as COPE members.
- COPE provides a forum for editors of academic journals to discuss issues relating to the integrity of the work submitted to, or published in, their journals. Examples include conflicts of interest, falsification and fabrication of data, plagiarism, unethical experimentation, redundant publication and authorship disputes. COPE encourages its members to seek investigation into possible misconduct by universities, hospitals or other funders.

Wiley-Blackwell Web Site

<http://authorservices.wiley.co/author/publicationethics.asp>

A Thought to Close On

“We seek not to imitate the masters, rather we seek what they sought”

Anonymous Eastern philosopher