

# Field specific research ethics

Ethics of technology and science  
Seminar 2

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# The problem

A well-known researcher in your theoretical field has announced a new result at a conference, and he said that the paper describing the result would soon be published.

From what the researcher presented, you have managed to rederive the result, and have furthermore expanded this new theory to tackle some hard problems in your field. However, it has been six months and the researcher has yet to publish the promised paper. In a private correspondence with this researcher, he tells you that he is in no hurry to publish his result, and a paper might come out next year.

Do you wait for his paper to be published, or do you publish your results, including the proof of the researcher's first claims, to finish your final PhD paper?

Problem owner: .....

The dilemma: .....



<b>Autonomy Matrix</b>		All principles, values, interests, duties, feelings, needs etc. of all involved parts					
All reasonable alternative actions to solve the problem		Possibilities:	Possibilities:	Possibilities:	Possibilities:	Possibilities:	Possibilities:
		Risks:	Risks:	Risks:	Risks:	Risks:	Risks:
		Possibilities:	Possibilities:	Possibilities:	Possibilities:	Possibilities:	Possibilities:
		Risks:	Risks:	Risks:	Risks:	Risks:	Risks:
		Possibilities:	Possibilities:	Possibilities:	Possibilities:	Possibilities:	Possibilities:
		Risks:	Risks:	Risks:	Risks:	Risks:	Risks:



## **Problem owner:**

Yourself and other researcher

## **The dilemma:**

What is the most ethical course of action to take on publishing your results to finish your PhD?

Does work presented at a conference allow you to base your own research on it before publication of the original work?

Should you allow slow progress of already published work (at presentation) impede on your own research?

Will this make researchers wary to present unpublished work at conferences?

 <b>Autonomy</b>		<b>All principles, values, interests, duties, feelings, needs, etc</b>		
		<b>Yourself</b>	<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Research Community</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Publish with claims, citing researcher's work as "in preparation"</b>	<p><b>Possibilities:</b> Get a high impact paper, and graduate smoothly.</p> <p><b>Risks:</b> Risk angering an influential colleague. Questionable citation of unpublished work. Future collaborators and peers might be wary of sharing unpublished results and ideas with you.</p>	<p><b>Possibilities:</b> Collaborate with other researcher on problem, prioritize other work to publish earlier</p> <p><b>Risks:</b> Lose impact work already done and presented.</p>	<p><b>Possibilities:</b> Get update on new results earlier. Sets a tighter deadline between announcing result and publishing papers.</p> <p><b>Risks:</b> Questionable authenticity of the results. People might become more wary of sharing unpublished results.</p>

 <b>Autonomy</b>		<b>All principles, values, interests, duties, feelings, needs, etc</b>		
		<b>Yourself</b>	<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Research Community</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Wait for his paper</b>	<p><b>Possibilities:</b> Less risk, potentially better developed theory. Researcher might appreciate your “sacrifice” for future collaborations.</p> <p><b>Risks:</b> This problem is solved and published by others. Wasting time waiting for other paper. Your new results are now purely “incremental,” and not a first proof. Major delay of PhD defense and/or career.</p>	<p><b>Possibilities:</b> Publish a high impact paper with more conclusions.</p> <p><b>Risks:</b> This problem is solved and published by others.</p>	<p><b>Possibilities:</b> Access to an authoritative paper with well-developed theory.</p> <p><b>Risks:</b> Much slower access to new theory and results. Normalizes a long delay between announcement and publications of results.</p>

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		<b>Yourself</b>	<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Research Community</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Collaborate with other researcher to publish both papers without long waiting period</b>	<p><b>Possibilities:</b> Get main and co-authorship on two influential papers. Likely productive collaboration, also opening future possibilities.</p> <p><b>Risks:</b> Delay of both papers due to slow collaboration</p>	<p><b>Possibilities:</b> Get main and co-authorship on two influential papers</p> <p><b>Risks:</b> Delay of own paper due to slow collaboration. “Less prestige” due to shared credit in written proof. This slower collaboration can be scooped.</p>	<p><b>Possibilities:</b> Get detailed insight into new theory and extended applications in two connected papers</p> <p><b>Risks:</b> Harder to catch up with a rapidly advancing field.</p>