



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# Building on a Premature Claim: A Cautionary Tale

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## Description

A scenario that covers ethical issues that arise when a researcher finds she cannot duplicate the research of others.

## Body

You see a very interesting conference article that sketched the proof of the "Sledgehammer Theorem." Using this powerful theorem, you write a journal article proving an important new result. After submitting your article, you develop doubts about the proof of the Sledgehammer Theorem. When you try proving it yourself, you cannot.

You contact the "Sledgehammer" authors to ask for a full version of their paper. They tell you it isn't quite ready (still working out a few bugs).

Is there anything you can do now?

## Notes

Caroline Whitbeck introduced methods and modules for discussing numerous issues in responsible conduct of research at a Sigma Xi Forum in 2000. Partial funding for the development of this material came from an NIH grant.

You can find the entire sequence on the OEC at [Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#). Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.

### **Contributor(s)**

Caroline Whitbeck

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### **Parent Collection**

Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research

### **Topics**

Collaboration

Data Management

### **Discipline(s)**

Computer, Math, and Physical Sciences

Research Ethics