



2/22/2022

Sadly, I have a tale to tell of academic misconduct and I'd appreciate it if as many people can read and pass this along as possible because bad faith conduct in academia should be pulled out root and stem.

I've been shocked by the low level of ethics in academia, but as I do not yet have anything submitted to a journal in my field, I had not anticipated someone using my work without citation.

I'm going to front load the **tl;dr** for those who do not want to read the entire tale:

"Building Neurodiversity-Inclusive Postsecondary Campuses: Recommendations for Leaders in Higher Education" <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2021.0042> relies substantially on work done by UC Access Now, including the UC Access Now Demandifesto, yet did not cite it.

I got wind of a paper in production that relied substantially on the UC Access Now [Demandifesto](#), but did not cite it. That is not only a breach of academic ethics, but a breach of its [Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 license](#).

Lead author UC Davis PhD candidate Patrick Dwyer was asked by a co-author to cite the Demandifesto. He demurred.

I emailed an early draft of the Demandifesto to the lead author & a co-author on Dec 11, 2019, as part of an effort to seek as broad a representation of the access needs of disabled people as I could. Furthermore, I introduced another of the paper's authors to the lead author on Feb 8, 2021. This is not a case of not doing a deep enough literature review. (The paper has 137 citations!)

When I got the news of the impending article, I sought advice on how to handle this. I was in the midst of writing a letter to the editor-in-chief of *Autism in Adulthood* when

the paper published. As the paper is now public without citation, I am taking my case to the public.

The UC Access Now Demandifesto started as a list of demands/ideas I wrote down in Fall 2019, my first quarter at UC Davis. I wrote the initial list of example demands based on my lived experience and doing accessibility audits around campus. I then solicited suggestions from other disabled people. Afterwards, I expanded its scope and wrote the glossary, fundamental action steps, summary of themes, and the appendix of demand examples.

On December 11, 2019, I began mailing the first brainstorm draft to several disabled people. I also sent it to the President and Vice President of what was then called the Autism and Neurodiversity Community at UC Davis, an official student social club, inviting club members to see if there were items they'd like to see included.

The President of the club and the lead author of this journal article, Patrick Dwyer, created a Google Doc into which was pasted my brainstorm list and additions were made directly into that. Some of those suggestions were rolled into the appendix of demand examples in the Demandifesto.

While the club members had every opportunity to join UC Access Now in our work, they did not get involved. What happened instead was taking the influence of the Demandifesto and stripping any disabled people who were **not** autistic/neurodivergent from the work.

(By this time, the Autism and Neurodiversity Community at UC Davis had changed names to the Aggie Neurodiversity Community at UC Davis, which remains its name today.)

This led to the creation of a document that is intermediate between the Demandifesto and the journal article. This document also violated the Creative Commons license by not giving attribution. This was sent to the UC Academic Senate and endorsed by the Academic Council.

Suddenly the social club led by Patrick Dwyer had become interested in the system-wide approaches to access throughout UC that UC Access Now was the first to articulate and enact, but **only** for autistic/neurodivergent students. Whereas I had approached them in the spirit of inclusion and pan-disability activism, they had taken

the Demandifesto & UC Access Now's work and narrowed it as well as denying attribution.

The only reason I did not raise this at the time was that I worried I would be perceived as putting ego before the struggle. But the escalation involved in doing this in an academic journal article forced me to speak up.

The timeline and contact history supports that this emerged from work UC Access Now did. Both the UC Access Now Demandifesto and the article are freely viewable by the public so you can compare directly. But for at-a-glance viewing, UC Access Now has [created a table](#) comparing similar passages and framing between these documents. I feel the case for citation is pretty clear.

Sincerely,

Megan Lynch
Founder & Volunteer
UC Access Now

Impact Statement

Another reason the lead author of this article needs to be held to account for his actions - this social justice work within academia is incredibly risky. The Demandifesto was written before any vaccine was available, during the ravages of an authoritarian regime, at a time when the streets of many US cities were aflame with federal military and militarized city & state police defending white supremacy & fascism while attacking the people, particularly BIPOC. There were still shortages of PPE, grocery items, and ICU beds. It was written at a time when despite all of this, students everywhere were held to the same production standards they'd be held to in non-pandemic, in peacetime, in a functioning democratic republic with supports available to us.

This was the milieu in which I framed and polished the UC Access Now Demandifesto. It took about a month of putting most other work aside. And not long after we launched, I experienced such profound burnout, it got in the way of leading the effort. I was having such cognitive difficulties, I had trouble functioning just when I most needed to. It took 2 - 3 months to recover enough to function better.

There have been several recent journal articles on the gender gap that has widened in academia, particularly STEM, during the pandemic. Any person in STEM who engages in

activism is having to balance that with their academic duties as well as the duties of household-running and self-care. Some even have additional duties like caretaking for ill family and friends. **Especially** during this ongoing global pandemic.

Marginalized people in academia/STEM not only have to deal with the enormous stress of their marginalization/s and the cascading damage that causes, but are often the ones taking on the work of fighting oppression within academia/STEM because those with more privilege are not stepping up. Including and **especially** those with tenure who are not marginalized.

What we see over and over again is those with less power in society and in academia taking the greatest risks. To add insult to injury, many of those with greater relative power & privilege will erase and/or appropriate the work of those who've taken great risks to publicly fight for equity in society, including academia. This is what I believe we are seeing here.

To appropriate the work of those putting their career and very life on the line while refusing that risk and enormous extracurricular workload one's self in order to concentrate on advancing one's own academic career is truly reprehensible.

Furthermore, it burnishes non-existent credentials in activism while erasing those who are actually doing that work.

This encourages people interested in these ideas to skip over the erased activists and seek out those who adulterate activism. It also spurs on the careers of those who engage in academic misconduct, stoking the cycle of abuse already rife within academia. It holds back change while pimping the work out for academic currency.

If I had not gotten wind of this paper, I might never have caught this and I doubt reviewers would have. Another problem here is that STEM is very bad at looking at anything not published by an academic journal as a source to be cited. I could find no way to add the Demandifesto on Google Scholar. The system is put together to only see certain formats as "authoritative", which is a laugh given how rife paper mills, p-hacking, P'shopping are in journals.

This isn't just about the need for citation in this paper. It's about a cluster of things that make academia, especially STEM, so toxic and oppressive.

We have the power to change things. It starts by speaking up, standing up (metaphorically). It continues by joining those who've already stood up, already taken great risks to their careers. It takes not letting cynicism pummel us into inaction.

It takes standing together with others who value human rights, value ethics, and running abusers out of town on a rail.

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Official Communication

February 25, 2022

Erica Mineo

I am the second author on the paper, and the one who pushed for including the UC Access Now Demandifesto in our publication. If we have 137 citations, why not 138 and the Demandifesto not only profoundly influenced the way I think about accessibility and disability activism, but also was, I believe, literally one of the *most* important influences on the paper's ideas.

When I approached one of the other co-authors so we could ask the lead author about citing Megan's work, we were met with a weak justification that it was "too late" to add additional citations. Not to mention that the lead author thought the Demandifesto was a "highly political" document and therefore citing it would be too substantive a change.

I immediately notified Megan once I got wind that the paper was sent off for publishing. As this was my first academic paper, I felt lost and had no idea about timing but felt that the entire reviewing and editing process felt rushed. Megan and I consulted with numerous researchers, professors, graduate students, and others about how we should proceed. As Megan was drafting a letter to the editor, that's when we got the news that the paper was published—but without citation.

We immediately had to amend our approach. Since the paper was now published, we were advised to go public. Why not pen a letter to the editor, or approach the other authors directly? If we went that route, we'd have to face the reality that official channels would likely protect their own interests at the expense of ethics, not to mention the entire process likely stonewalling in a tangle of red tape. In the face of this, I did everything I could to help reconstruct events to right this wrong.

I would like to make clear that I do not agree with the other authors' reasoning or handling of this situation. Moreover, I have observed what is a frankly callous and condescending response to Megan's legitimate concerns, which does not align with my own ethics and stance of what needs to be done.

I want to apologize to Megan, the disability community, the academic community, and everyone else affected by this paper for not doing enough sooner. I wanted to do the right thing all along—to give credit when credit is due. But in the process, I deferred to the judgement of people I was supposed to trust—the lead author and my fellow co-authors—and the decision to not initially cite the Demandifesto has led to a situation which I am trying my hardest to resolve. I take full responsibility for the role I played and am prepared to face the full consequences of my actions.