

A Dangerous Attack on the Scientific Process

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Over the past few months, a firestorm began online in response to an innocuous sounding scientific paper submitted to the online arXiv, entitled '[The Kepler Giant Planet Search. I: A Decade of Kepler Planet Host Radial Velocities from W. M. Keck Observatory](#)' The reason? One of the authors was Geoff Marcy, who had helped create the field of exoplanet astronomy and who discovered, with his colleague Paul Butler, 70 of the first 100 exoplanets.

Listeners to the Origins podcast will know of Marcy's work, as he appeared on an earlier podcast. In 2015 it was announced that Marcy had been the subject of an investigation at Berkeley into accusations of sexual harassment, which he contested. While on the basis of the investigation, the University did not recommend further sanctioning, the online protests were such that Marcy chose to leave his position. Articles have continue to appear based on the research program he helped lead and continued to contribute to.

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However, online mobs demanded that his name be removed from the current article, with sufficient pressure that the lead author withdrew the article from the online arXiv for reconsideration of the author list. Other coauthors and scientific collaborators of Marcy have also been targeted by groups within the scientific community.

Remarkably, instead of condemning this new form of harassment, the science magazine *Nature*, published a supportive article about it, and the American Astronomical Society is apparently considering whether this clear example of scientific impropriety might be appropriate.

This should not stand. It is a precedent that is dangerous for science and scholarship. It used to be that not giving someone credit for work that is the basis of published work was called plagiarism, or worse. There has to be a line separating the process of science from the vicissitudes of social mores, whether they arise from well meaning concerns, or neo-puritan angst.

You can read my article, released today in *Quillette*, where I describe these events, and their implications in depth, [here](#)



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Campus Puritans Come for an Astronomer—And His Byline

By demanding that morality tests be imposed on scientific journal authorship, Geoff Marcy's critics are creating a dangerous precedent.