

### Case study

#### Inequities and potential of exploitation in open science

SOURCE: Ewuoso, C., Cordeiro-Rodrigues, L., Wonkam, A., & de Vries, J. (2022). Addressing exploitation and inequities in open science: A relational perspective. *Developing World Bioethics*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dewb.12378>

Open collaboration in science sometimes triggers concerns about exploitation, both in terms of control over resources and professional equity. For example, scholars may worry that open science practices, including sharing data, methods, codes etc., might lead to various forms of exploitation and inequity, e.g., researchers might not be adequately acknowledged or credited for the resources that they have shared, that they may be scooped by other scientists who manage to publish faster and so on.

Cornelius Ewuoso and his co-authors in their article express worries from the point of view of the African scientific community that the potential of exploitation may disadvantageously affect under-resourced scholars, particularly those from developing countries. Two main concerns revolve around exploitation in open science. Firstly, relinquishing control and ownership of shared methods, data, or codes raises questions about their use. Researchers fear losing control over these resources, which could leave them vulnerable. Retaining control, however, can facilitate non-exploitative collaborations and ensure resources are available on researchers' terms. Secondly, there is a concern about professional vulnerability and equity. Researchers who share resources may not receive adequate acknowledgement or rewards for their efforts. There's also fear of being scooped by others who can publish quickly. Scholars worry that well-resourced researchers might exploit shared methods and data, potentially sidelining others.

Ewuoso et al. suggest: “[..] it appears reasonable that individuals who have shared their materials should be recognised by researchers who use them. This could be by way of giving credit to those who have shared. Sharing will cease to be just if individuals are not recognised for their work, scooped by research parasites, or undercut by others who can publish quickly on any subject. It could equally be by way of acknowledgement in the published work or co-authorship. We also think open datasets, codes and methods in repositories may be recognised as works of scholarship in their own right, reflecting the capabilities and inventiveness of those who created and shared them.”

### Questions for discussion:

- 1) Do you agree that practising open science might lead to exploitation? Why yes or no?
- 2) What should be done to reduce the risk of exploitation in the context of open science?
- 3) How to protect intellectual property when practising open science? How the authors of open datasets, codes, methods etc. be acknowledged? Are the existing practices of acknowledgement working well?