

RCR Topic: Continuum from Research Integrity to Research Misconduct & Protection of Human Subjects

Title: What's in a Name?

Case: Hubert, a first year M.A. student in History, conducts interviews with former copper miners from Michigan's Upper Peninsula. After collection of data, Hubert publishes an article on labor relations between Native American and Swedish immigrants in the Upper Peninsula mines during the 1950s.

- Hubert's idea originates from a conversation he overhears between former mine workers at a local café. Hubert approaches the men and asks if he may interview them. Since he does not know if this will be a viable project, Hubert does not mention that the interviews might be published, though he does inform the men of his intent to record. Moreover, since he is unsure of the project's status, Hubert does not inform faculty in the department.
- Roughly a year later, he decides to produce a transcript of the interviews and a manuscript for publication. Hubert changes the names of the interviewees, but does not notify them of his intent to publish. Hubert wants to impress his professors, so he refrains from informing them of his project until after it has been published.
- A major journal accepts his manuscript and Hubert lists the first and last names of the interviewees in the acknowledgements.
- After publication, four of the five interviewees thank Hubert for publishing their stories. The fifth interviewee is upset with Hubert for not disclosing that the interviews would be published and for mentioning his real name in the acknowledgements. Moreover, he is insulted that Hubert did not submit the manuscript to the interviewees for review before submission for publication.

Discussion Questions:

1. Does the fifth interviewee have a valid complaint regarding Hubert's research methods? Regardless of their satisfaction toward the article, do the other four interviewees have grounds for complaint?
2. Should Hubert have disclosed the names of the interviewees in the acknowledgements? Should he have allowed the interviewees to review his article before its publication?
3. What protocol could Hubert have followed in order to avoid this situation? How could this problem have been prevented?
4. How should this problem be categorized – questionable research practices, unacceptable research practices, or research misconduct?
5. What are possible consequences of this situation for Hubert?