

## Research misconduct: Write and pass (Responses)

*The exercise is intended to help students learn the elements of ethical arguments and gain experience analyzing them.*

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In December 2005, Korean scientist Dr. Hwang Woo Suk confessed to mislabeling a photo in published research. His June 2005 article in *Science* contains a photo of a cell colony labeled as the 5th of 11 human stem cell lines he produced from cells taken from one of his patients. However, the same photo also appears in an October 2005 article in *The Biology of Reproduction* where he labeled it as an ordinary embryonic cell colony (a different kind of cell), and from a different source (a fertility clinic). After initially denying charges of falsifying data, Hwang finally admitted to the duplication, thereby strengthening critics' charges that Hwang never cloned adult human stem cells.

**1. Do you believe Hwang's actions were ethically wrong? Why, or why not? Answer yes or no.**

YES, Hwang's actions were ethically wrong. Your answer is a *particular moral judgment*, or the *conclusion* of an ethical argument. Provide one *empirical* and one *normative* reason, or *premise*, to support your judgment.

Empirical claim (factual): **Hwang admitted to mislabeling the October photo.**

Normative claim (ethical principle): **One should not mislabel photos because it:**

1. **Is dishonest**
2. **Disrespects one's scientific colleagues**
3. **Erodes public support of science**

*Pass this paper back to your partner ----- >>>>*

**2. Most ethical arguments have *missing premises*. Identify a premise that must be added to the argument above in order to make it *valid* (that is, the conclusion follows from the premises).**

1. **Dishonest acts are always ethically wrong.**
2. **Disrespectful acts are always failures to do one's moral duty.**
3. **Eroding public support of science is a consequence that leads to an overall balance of more unhappiness than happiness in the world.**

*Pass this paper back to your partner ----- >>>>*

**3. Working together, combine your responses with your partner's responses. Refine, edit, and replace, your premises to construct a single valid argument. Write it here.**

1. **Hwang mislabelled photos, which is dishonest. Dishonest acts are always ethically wrong. Therefore, what Hwang did was ethically wrong.**
2. **Hwang mislabelled photos, an act of disrespect to scientific colleagues. Disrespectful acts are always failures to do one's moral duty. Therefore, Hwang failed to do his moral duty.**
3. **Hwang mislabelled photos, an act that erodes public support of science. Eroding public support of science will produce unhappiness. Producing unhappiness is wrong. Therefore, what Hwang did was wrong.**

**4. Most ethical arguments contain at least one weak premise. With your partner, identify the weakest premise in your argument, and explain the grounds on which you might challenge it.**

1. Dishonest acts are always ethically wrong. *What if you need to lie to save someone's life?*
2. Disrespectful acts are always failures to do one's moral duty. *Is it possible disrespect might on occasion be necessary to achieve some greater good, e.g., unmasking hypocrisy?*
3. Producing unhappiness is wrong. *Don't we sometimes have to produce some unhappiness in order produce a greater happiness, e.g., giving a child a painful injection (unhappiness) that will save her life (happiness)?*