



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

Why we should not introduce a “removal” retraction category

A summary and commentary of RISRS’s subcommittee on retraction taxonomies

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The RISRS sub-committee

Recommend a taxonomy of retraction categories/classifications and corresponding retraction metadata that can be adopted by all stakeholders.

It recommended a simplification of existing categories:

- Correction
- Expression of Concern
- Retraction with Replacement
- Retraction
- Withdrawal

- But dissent on introducing a 6th category, “removal”.

Why?

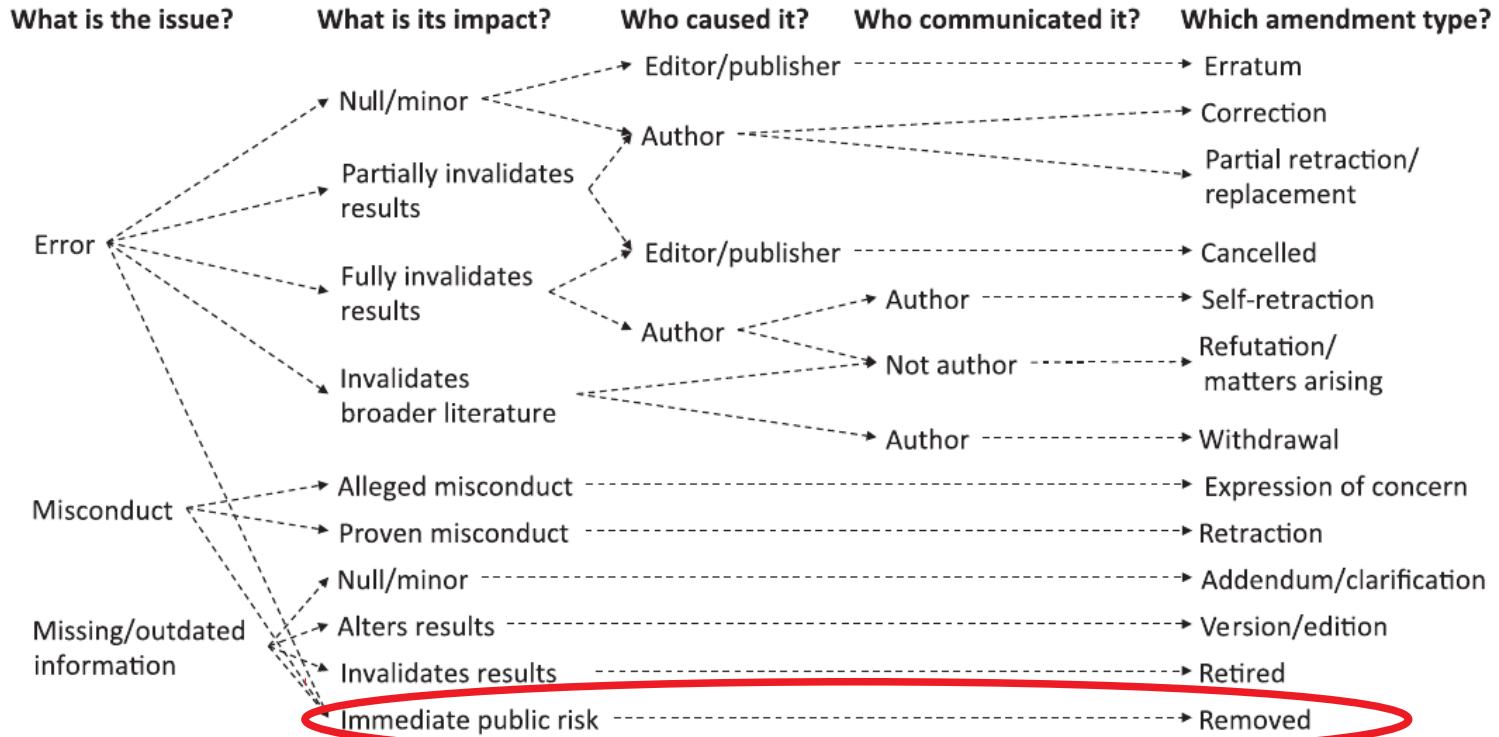


FIGURE 1 Flow chart illustrating how each amendment type may be identified by answers to at most four factual questions. These questions and answers summarize the dimensions and conditions described in Table 1 and in the text

(Fanelli, Ioannidis, Goodman 2018, Eur J Clin Inv)

Arguments for/against a “removal” in the report

For: Those articles that contain content that seriously violates ethical norms and standards, such as individuals’ rights to privacy, are determined to cause high-level national or international security risks, or that perpetuate harmful inequities, **such as racism** cannot simply be retracted and allow the original article, even with retraction labeling or watermark, to remain accessible.

Against: [...] The term “removal” represents a new category of retraction, which it is **not the task of this committee to determine**. [...] Determining **new forms of retractions** and new ethical norms around retraction is a task for professional society and ethics committees (e.g., COPE, CSE) and, where such new norms and retraction types to be introduced, the present taxonomy could be easily expanded to include a new term.

But IMO we really shouldn’t have any kind of removal in science.

Scholars are increasingly under attack

Journal of Controversial Ideas

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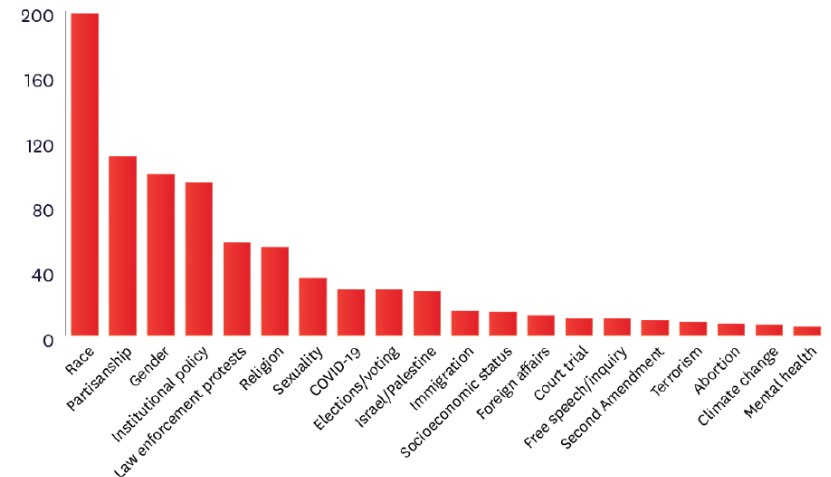


Welcome to the website of the *Journal of Controversial Ideas*, the first open access, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal specifically created to promote free inquiry on controversial topics.

The *Journal of Controversial Ideas* offers a forum for careful, rigorous, unpolemical discussion of issues that are widely considered controversial, in the sense that certain views about them might be regarded by many people as morally, socially, or ideologically objectionable or offensive. The journal offers authors the option to publish their articles under a pseudonym, in order to protect themselves from threats to their careers or physical safety. We hope that this will also encourage readers to attend to the arguments and evidence in

See also report by Foundation for Individual Rights in Education 2021, [thefire.org](https://www.thefire.org)

Number of scholars targeted for expression about the following topics:



“Non-epistemic” retractions already occur

- Bruce Gilley, Political Science, Portland State University, 2017. His paper, **The Case for Colonialism**, was retracted after academics initiated a petition calling to retract, signed by thousands, and then both Gilley and the journal editor received what they considered to be credible death threats.
- Stephen Gliske, a neuroscientist at University of Michigan, published a paper presenting **a new theory of the development of gender dysphoria**. It offended trans activists and their academic allies, who launched a retraction petition that was ultimately successful.
- Ted Hill, Math professor, Georgia Tech, wrote a paper offering an **evolutionary explanation for the male variability hypothesis** (the idea that human males are more variable than human females on many attributes). It was accepted for publication at a journal; this evoked protests and outrage, which had the effect of pressuring the accepting journal to “unaccept” the article. He then had it accepted at another journal, which evoked more outrage (the manifest substance of which involved the process by which the paper was accepted), and it was again unaccepted.

(Stevens, Jussim, Honeycutt 2020, *Societies* 10:82)

Who draws the line and where, between legitimate but controversial scholarship and “perpetuating harmful stereotypes”?

Even 'ancient' papers are retracted because offensive

RETRACTION

Observations on Homosexuality Among University Students: Retraction

Talbott, John A. MD

The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease: December 2020 - Volume 208 - Issue 12 - p 915

doi: 10.1097/NMD.0000000000001273

BUY

ERRATUM

Metrics

Erratum

The editor of *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* retracts the article "Observations on Homosexuality Among University Students" by Glover (Vol. 113, pp. 377–387, May 1951). See the scanned pdf of the original article at <http://links.lww.com/JNMD/A109>. The retracted original manuscript can be accessed online at https://journals.lww.com/jonmd/Citation/1951/11350/OBSERVATIONS_ON_HOMOSEXUALITY_AMONG_UNIVERSITY.1.aspx.

Simon LeVay, PhD, who wrote the groundbreaking study of brain differences between homosexual and heterosexual men almost 50 years ago (LeVay, 1991) has asked that the journal retract an article written 70 years ago (Glover, 1951). The 1951 Glover article supports long discredited beliefs, prejudices, and practices (e.g., conversion therapy) and will be retracted as requested. It will, however, be kept in the journal's archives for its historical value.

As an editor of scientific journals for more than 50 years, I have witnessed the changes brought about by

- 2) Proof that values, opinions and sensitivities change (and will continue doing so)
- 3) Scientific articles have documentary value beyond their scientific value
- 4) Even if "removed", the article will never actually "disappear", but become evidence of conspiracy

In summary:

- 1) Editors who wish to "cancel" an article already have means to do so.
- 2) A formal "removal" category would:
 - a) invite arbitrary use
 - b) formalize scientific "book burning"
 - c) without achieving it practically

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