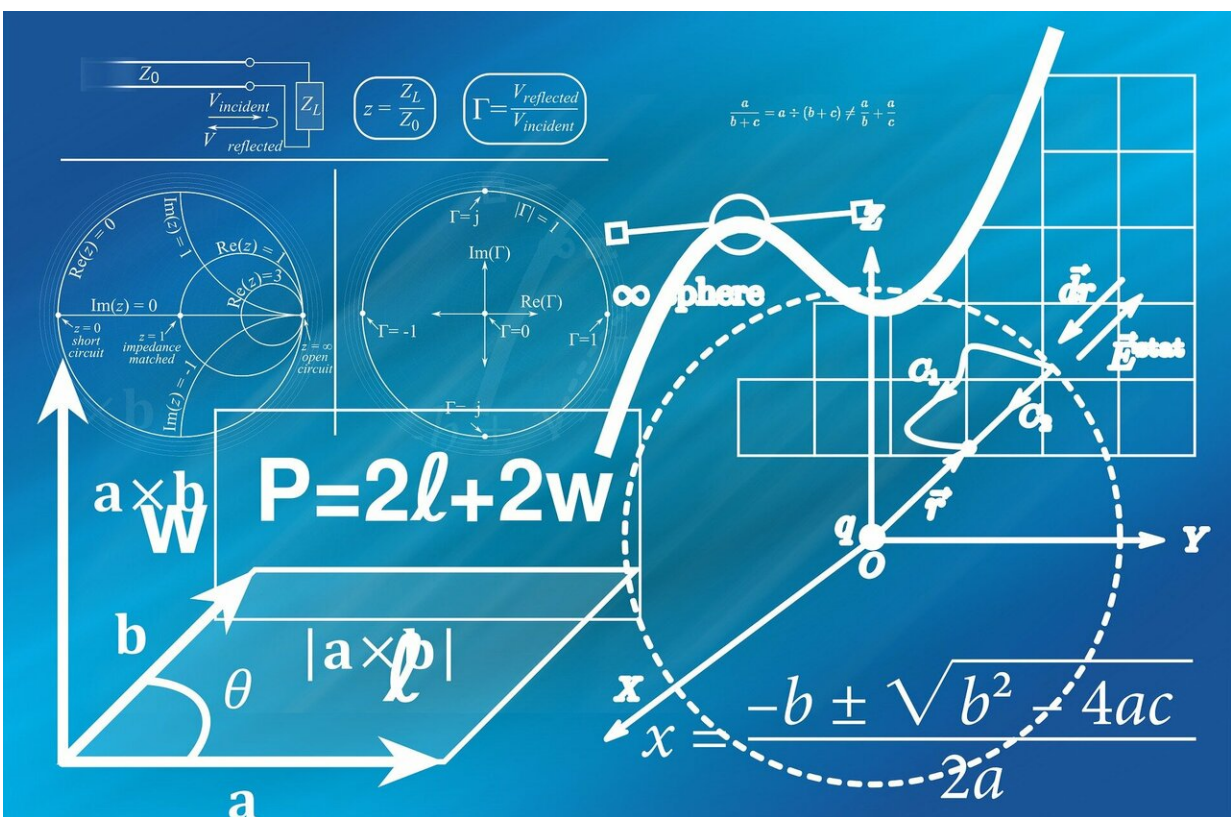


If we couch scientific misconduct as social misconduct the wider effects can be seen more clearly

November 17 2021, by David Bradley



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We all live and work in a scientific world, even those who perceive their realm to be within the arts and humanities. At no time is this more

apparent than at the height of a global pandemic. The impact of science on our lives and the environment are profound given that the technology wrought by our scientific understanding of the world around us can be used in a positive way or abused. As such, science is deeply embedded in our society.

Writing in the *International Journal of Sustainable Development*, Juliette Rouchier of the Université Paris-Dauphine, France, argues that the notion of scientific misconduct, once seemingly distant from our [everyday lives](#), is in fact far more relevant and is, in reality, social misconduct. The consequences of such misconduct however it might be labeled are therefore critically important to society.

Rouchier points out that scientists might imagine they benefit from an "aura of neutrality and reason." In this [sense](#), they can express their negative personal opinions in public as if those opinions are somehow relevant constructed knowledge. This can have serious consequences when an issue being discussed is as important as pollution, which has a significant political component that somehow lies outside the scientific realm. This is despite the fact that the technologies involved and their effects require a fundamental scientific understanding without which the technologies would not exist, our picture of the environment and the effects of pollution, and the new technologies to address the problem would not exist.

Fake news and misinformation emerging from the realm of science must be seen as a social problem and addressed as such. If falsehoods are being spread by individuals for political, economic, or other gain, then those disseminating such lies must be seen as being involved in scientific conduct of a most serious nature. The public needs to trust science, its processes and the knowledge it generates. Without that trust, the nuance of what is meant by a [scientific theory](#) is lost and those who take an anti-scientific stance on many topics is reinforced to the detriment of us all

and to the detriment of the world in which we live.

More information: Juliette Rouchier, Scientific misconduct as social misconduct, *International Journal of Sustainable Development* (2021).

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