

Letters

Textbook Dispute

The article "Textbook credits bruise psychiatrists' egos," by Eliot Marshall (News & Comment, 20 Feb., p. 835) raises a number of important issues concerning the rewards of the scientific and academic enterprise. A major issue in the dispute described by Marshall revolves around the expected role of the "Editor" of a multiauthored scientific volume. It is true, as Marshall describes, that Jesse O. Cavenar devoted a considerable amount of time to the textbook *Psychiatry*. For these efforts, he has been well compensated financially by Lippincott and rewarded professionally by being listed as an editor. However, Cavenar did not participate in the major deliberations among the members of the editorial board regarding decisions about the scope of the textbook, the contents of the individual volumes and chapters, or the individuals invited to be section editors and chapter authors. He did "edit" the final manuscripts, but in this activity he performed tasks usually undertaken by members of the staff of publishing firms—tasks not usually assigned to academic "editors."

Marshall's statement that "Cavenar is now editing the third revision" is a misrepresentation of the true situation. A third revision of the textbook is under way but, in the revision of the sections for which I am responsible, Cavenar is not playing a significant academic, professional, or scholarly role. He has not been involved in any of the decisions regarding which chapters should be revised, deleted, or added. Nor has he been involved in communication with the section editors or chapter authors concerning matters of content or emphasis. I have performed these tasks in consultation with Robert Michels, the editorial board, and the staff at Lippincott.

The tone of Marshall's article implies that there is no relation between the sales value resulting from the editors' professional prestige and their achievements, competence, or expertise. Given the nature of modern science, it is almost impossible for a single individual or even a small group of individuals to be expert in all areas of a field. Hence, the necessity for multiauthored textbooks in almost all fields of medicine and science, including psychiatry. The sales potential of some volumes may depend exclusively on the "ego" of the "heavy hitters," but Marshall ignores what, in my opinion, were the major criteria in the selection of the leadership for this text—achievements in

scientific investigation, academic scholarship, and clinical expertise. By these criteria, Cavenar is not "in the same league."

Issues of priority of discovery and sequence of authorship are essential components of the reward system of academia and science. Marshall's article trivializes these issues by phrases such as "tag along with Michels into the card catalog," and "equal clout." Cavenar had a legal complaint against Lippincott that was adjudicated by the court. However, he does not have a moral claim to academic authority based on achievement. Marshall's article, by not coming to grips with the nature of the work of "Editor" and with the role of competence and achievement in academic authority, has done a disservice to his field of journalism and to the readers of *Science*.

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In his 20 February article, Marshall omits Lippincott's position with respect to the credit for the publication *Psychiatry*. I spoke to Marshall before publication and told him that Lippincott had given Michels primary credit because we believe Michels had made a greater contribution to its success than Cavenar had. I also pointed out that the credit had been approved by H. Keith H. Brodie, Cavenar's mentor. These facts are not mentioned in Marshall's article.

For the record, Lippincott does not share John de Carville's view that Lippincott was disappointed in the amount of work that Michels had done. To the contrary, Lippincott believes that Michels contributed significantly to the success of the project and fulfilled his contractual obligations to us. Lippincott officials so testified and made this position clear at the time of the dispute.

Moreover, it is apparent from the context of de Carville's statement that he made it in an effort to placate Cavenar, in the hope that Cavenar would abandon his position that he was entitled to sole credit on the cover of the loose-leaf. Unfortunately, that effort by de Carville and the continuing efforts by Lippincott for almost a year had no effect. Cavenar insisted to the end that he was entitled to sole credit on the cover of the loose-leaf (or material changes in the contract in his favor). Cavenar's complaint was also premised on that theory. Unfortunately, the article downplays Cavenar's extreme position on this matter and thereby presents a misleading picture of the discussions and the efforts that Lippincott made to resolve the credit dispute.

The editorial board that was assembled by Michels and operated under his chairman-

ship was responsible for creating the manuscript and initially reviewing it. Cavenar's primary responsibility was to review the manuscript after it had been already reviewed under the aegis of the editorial board. We believe the persons responsible for the creation and initial review of the manuscript were far more important to the ultimate success of the project than Cavenar was.

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The episode of disputed authorship detailed recently by Marshall is of particular interest, not so much because a senior and prominent contributor insisted on first authorship, but because of the author's rationale. "First is better," he explained. "It goes back to prehistoric times." It is reminiscent of the famous Ring Lardner line, "Shut up," he explained. The quotes are remarkably revealing. While readers may now wonder how many publications are actually written, or even read, by their first authors, this anecdote more than anything else represents the caricature that psychiatry has been trying to overcome.

Imagine an eminent psychiatrist quoting the law of the jungle! "I'm more famous than you, therefore I get what I want," seems to be the message here. This is an open warning to junior faculty, but what is the message to patients? Patients are more vulnerable. How many patients have been counseled by a psychiatrist who believes "first is best" and quotes the "biology of the species"? What has the message been to women, blacks, homosexuals, and others who turn to the psychiatrist for ways of coping with problems created by an unfair society?

Making this caricature complete is the news that Michels conducted a psychoanalytic seminar on "The impact of middle age on ambition and ideals" (1).

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REFERENCES

1. R. Michels, talk given at a seminar entitled "The Middle Years: New Psychoanalytic Perspective" (sponsored by the Columbia Association for Psychoanalytic Medicine, New York, 8 March 1987).

Response: Klerman raises many issues to which I can respond and, I hope, clarify.