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**TO CITE OR NOT TO CITE? AN EXPLORATION  
OF THE CITATIONAL ETHICS POLICY OF THE  
*JOURNAL FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY BIBLICAL  
STUDIES***

***Leah Stanley***

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## Abstract

The ethics of citations are more frequently becoming a part of what constitutes publication ethics. This article explores the ambiguities of citation ethics and the possibility of proposing an umbrella policy for all academic journals. It argues that such a policy facilitates citational ethics practices without penalizing authors or making citation choices a subjective, individual decision. Through exploring the policy of the *Journal for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies (JIBS)*, which demonstrates its inclusive practices and is indicative of its stance on citation ethics, this article analyzes what it means to cite an author critically while acknowledging the inevitable nuances and subjectivities which that entails. To contrast *JIBS*'s forward-thinking policy with those of other journals and their ethical practices, it uses the reactions and responses to the 2020 conviction of Jan Joosten to explore the need for a universal policy. Joosten's conviction, explicitly mentioned in the *JIBS*'s policy, illustrates the necessity for our citational practices to be ethical and critical. The responses of the *Journal for Afroasiatic Languages and Linguistics* and *Vetus Testamentum* are analyzed. Finally, this article uses a hypothetical case study to put *JIBS*'s policy into practice and seeks to show the potential for further discussion and development of citational ethical practices. It suggests that, for citational ethics to work in practice, they should be implemented throughout the discipline as an umbrella policy.



Réfléchir à la façon dont on cite fait plus souvent partie de ce qui constitue l'éthique de la publication aujourd'hui. Cet article explore les ambiguïtés liées à l'éthique de la citation et la possibilité de proposer une politique générale pour toutes les revues universitaires. Une telle politique encouragerait les pratiques éthiques concernant les citations sans pénaliser les auteurs ou faire du choix de citer une décision subjective et individuelle. En explorant la politique du *Journal for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies (JIBS)*, qui est inclusive et représentative de sa position concernant l'éthique de la citation, cet article analyse ce que signifie citer un auteur de manière critique, tout en reconnaissant les nuances et les subjectivités inévitables que cela implique. En contrastant la politique avant-gardiste de *JIBS* avec celles d'autres revues et leurs pratiques éthiques, cette contribution revient sur les réactions et les réponses à la condamnation de Jan Joosten en 2020 pour explorer le besoin d'une politique universelle. La condamnation de Joosten, explicitement mentionnée dans la politique de *JIBS*, montre qu'il est nécessaire que nos pratiques de citations soient éthiques et critiques. Les réponses du *Journal for Afroasiatic Languages and Linguistics* et de *Vetus Testamentum* sont analysées. Enfin, cet article propose une étude de cas hypothétique pour tester la politique de *JIBS* et cherche à identifier le potentiel pour développer des pratiques éthiques en matière de citation. L'autrice suggère que, pour que l'éthique de la citation fonctionne dans la pratique, elle doit être mise en œuvre dans l'ensemble de la discipline comme une politique générale.



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## TO CITE OR NOT TO CITE? AN EXPLORATION OF THE CITATIONAL ETHICS POLICY OF THE *JOURNAL FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY BIBLICAL STUDIES*

*Leah Stanley*



### Introduction

Citational ethics, this article argues, should be at the heart of ethical publication practices. An exploration of the *Journal for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies's* (*JIBS*) policy can be used to both influence and inform future ethical citation choices, especially for new journals, such as *AABNER*, that are in the process of creating such policies. First, this article explores the citational ethics policy of *JIBS*, a journal committed to publishing inclusive and interdisciplinary work in the traditional discipline of biblical studies. Their webpage testifies to this:

*JIBS* is a peer-reviewed, open access journal dedicated to publishing cutting edge articles that embody interdisciplinary, social justice-oriented, feminist, queer, and innovative biblical scholarship. We welcome

submissions that challenge canonical and/or disciplinary norms and boundaries or that query the field of biblical studies' relationship to the broader investigation of human religion, culture, and literature.<sup>1</sup>

Social justice, they claim, is fundamental to the journal's publishing and policymaking ethos. Not only do their submissions "challenge canonical and/or disciplinary norms," their stance regarding citing sexual predators breaks the norm too. Owing to its inclusive and noncanonical focus, *JIBS* is not representative of all journals, let alone biblical journals, which is something worth addressing in and of itself.

*JIBS*'s policy for citational ethics states:

Sexual violence of any kind is a scourge, and when it is allowed a place at any table, it works against the seeking of justice. Papers and submissions that *insist* on *uncritically* citing the publications of known sexual predators will not be considered for publication in *JIBS*. This includes but is not limited to the work of Jan Joosten, Richard Pervo and C. T. R. Hayward.<sup>2</sup>



Second, this article uses this policy to explore what critical citations are and how they can be actualized in articles, analyzing the bold stance taken by the editors of *JIBS* against unethical and immoral behavior. Since the implementation of this policy is not common practice, it will explore how other journals, including the *Journal for Afroasiatic Languages and Linguistics (JALL)* and *Vetus Testamentum (VT)*, navigate citational ethics in response to Jan Joosten's conviction.<sup>3</sup> As he is specifically named in *JIBS*'s policy, it is useful to examine how their approaches differ and analyze whether an umbrella policy is required.

Finally, this article uses a hypothetical case study to explore the complexities of formulating a citational ethics policy, important among

<sup>1</sup> *JIBS* 2018a.

<sup>2</sup> *JIBS* 2018b.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on Joosten's conviction, see Bland and Henley 2020. This article does not comment on the sentence Joosten faced; rather it looks at the way academia navigates citing (or not citing) his work and uses his example as a means to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about shaping future approaches to citational ethics.

which are questions of hierarchy in the discipline of biblical studies and the unlikelihood of convictions for academics accused of sexual violence. It then goes on to suggest that for citational ethics to work in practice, they need to be implemented throughout the discipline as an umbrella policy.

## ***JIBS's Policy***

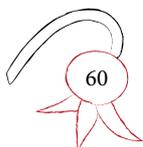
It is important to look at just how *JIBS's* policy is attentive to being critical, since it states that “[p]apers and submissions that *insist* on *uncritically* citing the publications of known sexual predators will not be considered for publication in *JIBS*” (*JIBS* 2018b). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), being critical can be understood in the sense of one’s methodological practice and in the sense of one’s judgment. The *OED* (2022a) first, however, defines the term “uncritically” in the context of “the scholarly analysis or evaluation of texts: in a way which is not in accordance with critical methods, or which lacks critical exactness.” The mention of “scholarly analysis” draws attention to the fact that scholarship includes thorough research, evaluation, and “critical exactness.” Thus, citational ethics should also be included. Being critical of the sources (and the authors) used in our work encourages us as scholars to evaluate the validity of the research we use and quote. This is similar to writing a literature review and discerning the usefulness of a source. *JIBS's* policy extends the review practice when it asks of scholars that they critically consider the author as a subject of merit along with their work. There is value in what *JIBS* demands. Why should one be critical of the sources and not their authors? Being critical, they argue, should extend to citation practices. For *JIBS*, being critical can manifest itself in the form of non-citation or in the acknowledgment of the immoral behavior of someone, should one choose to cite them. Consequently, *JIBS* brings the definition of “uncritically” to the forefront of their citational ethics policy, which requires an analysis and evaluation of the author as well as the source.

The *OED's* (2002b) second definition says that “uncritically” means “[i]n a way which does not judge harshly or censoriously; (also) in a



way which lacks good judgement or discernment.” This definition adds another layer to the practice of critical analysis, bringing judgment into the equation. This indicates that in research and in citational ethics, scholars should use (good) judgment when they find fault with a source or an argument or a behavior. It bears mentioning, however, that judging and finding fault are two subjective endeavors in which the ambiguity inherent in being critical, which controls *JIBS*’s citation ethics policy, is particularly apparent. Because of the subjectivity involved in the act of judgment, it is difficult to bring uniformity to the way different publications monitor critical citations and to the standards they uphold to do so. One must acknowledge this challenge when formulating policy, as this ambiguity in critical thought controls to what extent citations can be ethical. Arguably, the policy’s demand for a process of being critical, with various levels of harshness, is a promising start for citational ethics practices. Both definitions found in the *OED* underline the ambiguity of criticalness; this ambiguity will impede the ability to standardize citations, which renders the creation of a policy even more challenging. For this reason, *JIBS*’s policy is analyzed, so that we may see how it functions in a hypothetical case study in comparison to real-life examples of citation ethics (or a lack thereof). While standardization would make for a more cohesive and simpler citation ethics practice, it is unfortunately not realistic. Therefore, a kind of critical awareness is better than nothing.

Respecting critical citation necessarily requires implementation. In *JIBS*, when an author has unknowingly cited a sexual predator, the editors have an informal conversation with them to discuss how to be critical. Crucially, this may be the first time an author learns of the behavior; therefore, this conversation allows for a new approach to scholarship to be undertaken, and new possibilities can be forged for ethical scholarship that begins with citations. The conversation differs depending on the scholarly position (i.e., status) of the author. Inevitably, a post-graduate student will cite critically in a different manner than a tenured professor (I will return to the importance of positionality in my analysis of the hypothetical case study). One approach for the author is to recognize that they have cited a sexual predator and remove the citation, replacing it with another author and not giving the predator “a place at



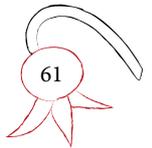
any table,” to quote *JIBS*’s submission guidelines (*JIBS* 2018b). By not engaging with a predator’s work, the author is refusing to promote them as a scholar; in theory, no one would be aware of this decision. In this case, the decision not to cite is hidden, since one cannot know whether the non-citation was deliberate. To some extent, this is best, as it does not draw further attention to the scholar and does not give them any space.

If a blanket ban on citing the work of sexual predators were implemented, one positive consequence would be that the work of less-prominent scholars could be brought to the forefront. This would help alleviate a situation in which predators are cited “by default,” because of the importance of network affiliations which favor scholarly prominence over ethics (Meredith Warren [Editor in Chief of *JIBS*] cited in *Urbs and Polis* 2021). As Mark G. Brett (2021, 819–820) highlights, in post-pandemic biblical scholarship, “minoritized voices need to be amplified, and more ‘partial’ scholarly traditions built from below.” Minoritized voices run the risk of being stifled through the repetitive citation of the “big” names in a discipline. Therefore, when one learns that these big names are accused, for instance, of pedophilia, one can search beyond their scholarship (while also acknowledging their influence) and cite newer or forgotten scholars. Putting pressure on authors to reflect on who they are citing begins the process of making citations more inclusive, and it directly impacts “scholarly traditions,” engaging them in necessary ethical debates.

Diversifying footnotes can only be positive for the discipline since it develops the inclusivity of scholarship. When you engage with new voices, the experience “changes your work for the better” (cited in *Urbs and Polis* 2021).<sup>4</sup> In *Living a Feminist Life*, Sara Ahmed (2017, 15) acknowledges the difficulty of her own citational practices, since “[the] paths (of non-white male scholars) might have become fainter from not being traveled upon; so we might work harder to find them.” However, just because something is difficult does not mean it should not be done,

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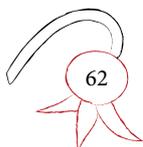
<sup>4</sup> As an example of citational ethics, Young has set himself the challenge to write articles where at least 50 percent of the scholars named are non-white males, which he says will improve his work for the better.



especially when it promotes more inclusive, and inevitably more critical, diverse scholarship. Ahmed's descriptions of the challenges involved in citing other scholars mirror Brett's allusion to the building of "partial scholarly traditions" (Brett 2021). These traditions must be built from somewhere. Implementing a policy for citational ethics begins this process and reduces the challenge that individual authors can face.

However, with the practice of non-citation, a difficulty can appear if one, in choosing not to cite, ignores crucial scholarship in the discipline, especially in cases when a predator is known only through the "whisper network" (women sharing their experiences concerning certain predators with each other and warning female colleagues about men whose behavior is dangerous, inappropriate, or unethical) (Urbs and Polis 2021). Because one cannot properly explain or justify a non-citation, it is likely that some predators will only be known to the whisper network. The whisper network functions in the shadows, unofficially, which makes it more difficult to be explicitly critical. Additionally, one should consider that in the whisper network a rumor can be incorrect, which raises the question of whether and how critical citations should be informed by the network. Because convictions of sexual predators are unlikely (an issue to which I will return), the whisper network is a place where allegations frequently exist without a conviction. This is a mighty barrier to implementing a policy concerning citation ethics (Barr and Topping 2021).

Alongside the whisper network, it is also essential to consider networks of (predominantly) male colleagues who continuously cite each other and support a hierarchy that favors a select few authors. Understandably, people may not want to disrupt or upset the powerful networks that cite problematic scholars, which translates into a reluctance to be critical. Consequently, within the language of "networks", there are multiple networks at play that impact how critical an author can be, depending on the networks in which they are involved and that can control them. For example, Jan Reedijk states that "[a] well-known practice is to send one's own recently published paper to many colleagues, stressing its importance, in the hope they will cite it" (2012, 829). Consequently, if an academic chooses to not cite someone, and this decision is obvious, it will restrict the likelihood of their own paper



being cited. It contributes to the cycle of voices being repressed because the established standard is the repeated citations of the same important names.

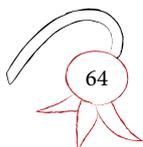
Sarah Scullin (2016), a classicist, describes the absence “where citation would otherwise be natural” as potentially “an equally ominous presence” in an author’s article. The idea of this absence as inauspicious highlights the problem/transgression without acknowledging it. It demonstrates the author’s critical awareness of the above-mentioned networks while leaving the author vulnerable through the action of non-citation. The author finds themselves vulnerable when they stand up against academic hierarchies and the standard practices they represent. However, when one must choose between being faced with an “ominous” threat or being ethical, the latter should be prioritized to prevent further complicity, which would be embodied by an author avoiding non-citation, despite the existence of a transgression. It would be more “ominous” to cite the work of a convicted pedophile, without being critical, than to remove their work. Hierarchical networks are what define what counts as “ominous,” demonstrating that the possibility of going against standard citation practices is limited for those outside the hierarchies.

Another approach that can be adopted by an author who wants to cite critically is to cite sexual predators and acknowledge their actions and/or convictions in the footnotes. To some extent, this is not critical enough, as it gives predators space and power in the body of the paper because their names are cited. Consequently, there is the option to not name them explicitly in the paper, and rather present the idea while moving their name to the footnotes. This decreases the promotion of their ideas but still cites their scholarship. The option of a partial citation or a qualified citation explains the decision and confronts the ethical issue instead of avoiding the conversation.

Two elements need to be considered when discussing the author: the awareness of their biography in relation to their work and the relationship between the scholar and their scholarship. First, evaluating a scholar’s work and acknowledging their transgressions is necessary, as this engages openly with their crimes and precludes one from being complicit by “uncritically” citing them. Scullin (2016) highlights the



necessity of engaging with an author's biography in the classroom. Logically, the critical dimension of scholarship should start in how one cites. This engagement reduces potential complicity and, when it is taught in the classroom, it encourages ethical citation practices for future scholars. Positively, scholars who are aware of these issues will be more careful in their choices and adopt critical citation practices. If the critical process starts with citations, it can be mirrored in the classroom and other scholars can take note and learn. As authors become more critical, more barriers in the established networks will be taken down. At the same time, the policy facilitates discussion of the biography of scholars in order to foster a "social-justice-oriented" journal, because it does not ignore or silence ethical questions and begins addressing them in a critical policy for citations (*JIBS* 2018a). A scholar's violent crimes are an integral part of their biography; thus they should also form an equally important part of one's critical analysis. Because critical citations expose ethical questions, they play a role in "social-justice-oriented" conversations—conversations in which academic journals have a duty to participate.



In a different sphere of academia and the arts, a British museum, the Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft, highlights the immoral actions of "20th century sculptor, typeface designer and printmaker, Eric Gill," whose "life as a serial sexual abuser of his two pubescent daughters was first documented in Fiona MacCarthy's 1989 biography of the artist, as was his incestuous relationship with his sister" (Güner 2017). Importantly, a distinction should be made in connection with the fact that his crimes are public knowledge, unlike the actions of those mentioned in the whisper network. Publicity facilitates critical discussion when it continues to engage with his work. However, the Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft's "radical invention" of their exhibition encourages visitors to question "how knowledge of Gill's abusive behavior affects our impressions of his work, some of which is sexually and anatomically explicit. When organizing the exhibition, the museum took advice from several charities who work with sexual abuse survivors" (Güner 2017). By posing these questions, the exhibition can contribute to educating the public about the impact of Gill's biography and ask them whether one should still engage with his work. It can also focus

on the victims by asking survivors for advice. This is a practical example that concentrates on social justice. It should be considered as an alternative approach to a critical citation, educating readers about the wrongdoings of sexual predators in a footnote.

One can add Stephen Young's (2020) significant argument to the discussion concerning the (im)possibility of separating a scholar from their scholarship. His argument is informed by the events surrounding Joosten's prosecution and his subsequent statement thereon. Young states that "the instinct to protect the reputation of an abuser's scholarship is a form of Himpathy," and that this draws attention to the inextricable link between the scholar and their scholarship, which means that citing them is akin to ignoring the scholar's sin. A scholar's work is a part of them, and the scholar's person is undoubtedly part of their work. Exemplifying the unity between the scholar and their words, Elaine Scarry's (1987, 33) notion of "voice" can be extended to an author's written "voice" as a "final source of self-extension" and suggests that the scholar's work is an extension of their person. Consequently, it does not make sense to separate the scholar's work from their personal wrongdoings. Indeed, were we to talk about a scholar's achievement(s), their work would be praised as a form of "self-extension" (Scarry 1987, 33).

Young is influenced by Kate Manne's (cited in Young 2020) definition of "himpathy" as "the excessive sympathy sometimes shown toward male perpetrators of sexual violence," which reduces the prioritization of the victims when discussing, for example, Joosten's crimes. This also contributes to the fact that it remains legitimate to cite his work. Unironically, Joosten himself (in a highly criticized statement) appears unable to separate himself from his scholarship. Joosten (2021) uses scripture to absolve himself from his wrongdoings. He writes: "Taking my inspiration from Ezekiel 33:11, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live.'" Yet two sentences later, he claims: "I have changed, but my professional interests, training, and abilities are still with me" (Joosten 2021).<sup>5</sup> Joosten



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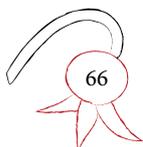
<sup>5</sup> See Johanna Stiebert's (2021) discussion of Joosten's inadequate and privileged statement.

argues that his changed behavior allows him to separate himself from his sin, and he reinforces the permanence of his scholarly interests. By using scripture to demonstrate this change of self, however, he actually reinforces the very link he seeks to disprove: man and scholar are one and the same (Joosten 2021).

## Citational Ethics in Relation to Jan Joosten

*JIBS*'s policy does not reflect common practice in biblical studies, or in academia in general, and other journals have had to navigate publishing and citing Joosten without a public policy about citational ethics. It should be noted, however, that journals may have implicit policies regarding such matters like violent crimes, even if they are not openly stated. Yet because these policies are often implicit, it creates a situation where individuals are responsible for putting citational ethics into practice. Leaving citational policy unarticulated creates far too much room for subjective interpretation. The Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), after an initial tweet regarding Joosten's "stepping down," which was considered an "insensitive response," issued a second statement, highlighting the wider issue of "more frequent abuses of power, such as sexual harassment" (SBL Council 2020). As the "oldest and largest learned society devoted to the critical investigation of the Bible from a variety of academic disciplines," with over 8,000 members, the SBL, when it alludes to abuses of power in the discipline and expresses its desire to "build a strongly ethical" society, inadvertently brings the question of citation ethics to the forefront, since its statement about ethics is tied to its reaction to Joosten's conviction (HarperCollins Publishers 2022). It remains true, as will be shown, that individual journals approach the question of ethics in various ways.

In the case of *JALL*, their policy about citational ethics (or lack thereof) contrasts with *JIBS*'s policy, since the journal focuses on publication ethics. On June 8, 2020, the journal published an online article by Joosten. Following his conviction, on June 18, 2020, the journal released a "Publisher's Notice" detailing how it was dealing with this news: "The publisher considered initiating retraction proceedings, but concluded



that this would not be possible, as the only permissible grounds for retracting an academic article are research misconduct and/or breach of publication ethics” (Brill 2021). Besides mentioning Joosten’s conviction, the *JALL* does not express an ethical stance about it. On the one hand, this notice is a critical acknowledgment of Joosten’s actions, because it bears witness to what he has done; on the other hand, its language neither condemns his actions nor apologizes for publishing the article. This is too uncritical. To quote Desmond Tutu: “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor” (Tutu 2017).

The journal’s neutrality on the subject appears to favor Joosten, and not the victims of his crimes. This emphasizes the need for critical citations to redress the balance in favor of the victims. In addition, with Joosten, one is not in a gray situation, since he has been convicted by the legal system, and his actions are morally repugnant. Brill’s refusal to take a moral stance about the actions of a convicted pedophile does not reflect the responsibility that comes with citational ethics; if Brill was truly responsible for their citational ethics, they would have taken a clearer stand and condemned Joosten’s actions unequivocally. The publishing house “considered initiating retraction proceedings” rather than engaging in a thorough critical process. As a result, the notice seems linguistically uncritical. The verb “considered” lacks strength and resembles a thought process; it is not an action. An action would have involved an evaluation or analysis. Unlike *JIBS*, Brill believes that “research misconduct and/or [...] publication ethics” are the only reasons to moderate publication. For Brill, publication ethics focuses on actions such as plagiarism, “failure to meet legal and professional obligations,” “segmented publication,” and “unprovenanced artefacts.” It does not mention convictions or an author’s wrongdoings in their guide about publication ethics (Brill 2023).<sup>6</sup> This allows people like Joosten to stay



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<sup>6</sup> Brill’s guide does refer to actions of “honorary authorship,” “gift authorship,” and “guest authorship,” which demonstrates their understanding of the power imbalances in academia that impact one’s citation practices. However, this still does not allude to non-citation or critical citations due to a scholar’s crimes or actions.

at the “table” and be a part of academic discussion. It is an insufficient response to his crimes.

Citation ethics need to be included in publication ethics. Publishing houses have a responsibility to be aware of the actions of those they publish, since publications serve as a platform and give abusers a “place” at the “table” (JIBS 2018b). Understandably, retracting an article is not a simple thing to do. Yet, in this particular case, as the article is online, it would have been possible to do so without affecting print. In their absence of action, Brill effectively separated the scholar from their scholarship, which allowed them to continue to have Joosten published on their site while choosing to ignore that citation ethics are as important as publication ethics. In promoting Joosten’s work, Brill discounts his actions. There is also irony in the fact that the publisher goes out of its way to show that it has upheld one set of ethical standards but does not explain why they do not hold the author accountable for a breach of another, one might say more fundamental, set of ethical standards. While an article may be sound in terms of research ethics and in terms of Brill’s—or anyone else’s—understanding of publication ethics, this ought to be moot if one fails to consider the actions of the scholar being published.

*VT*, a journal where Joosten held the position of editor-in-chief, addressed the ethical question, in the context of this case, in a statement that sought to underline their awareness of the power of publication. The remaining editors presented Joosten as “our former colleague,” deliberately separating themselves (and the journal) from him. This is further emphasized through the use of the past tense: he “was not the person we thought he was” (*VT* 2020). The editors’ view of Joosten has changed, and crucially they refer to him as a “person,” which implies that his scholarship is irrelevant in this case. They state:

As an editorial board we understand our mandate to be vetting and publishing the finest biblical studies scholarship. But we recognize that our responsibility to highlight and promote excellent biblical scholarship is part of our larger responsibility to protect and nurture our fellow human beings. For this reason, we have acted quickly to remove Joosten from any and all activities affiliated with *Vetus Testamentum*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *VT* 2020.



The use of “vetting” demonstrates the editors’ rigorous publishing practice; in addition, the recognition of a “larger responsibility” points to an understanding of citation ethics. In order to “highlight and promote excellent biblical scholarship,” the journal cannot be associated with Joosten, nor can it cite or publish his work. If the journal adopts this stance regarding their dealings with Joosten, ideally a similar approach should be reflected in citation practice as well. Additionally, their public statement could function as a deterrent for authors who cite Joosten’s work, and it could encourage reflection about citational practices. Part of the journal’s responsibility when publishing scholarship is to be aware of whose ideas are being cited, which facilitates the publication of ethical material. If we return to Ahmed again, who displays a thoughtful awareness of citation ethics, she argues that “citation is feminist memory” and draws our attention to the significance of honoring the feminists of previous generations (Ahmed 2017, 15). Something similar can be said concerning victims of sexual harassment and sexual assault: it is essential that papers honor them by not uncritically citing predators. Adopting ethical citation practices respects the voices of victims, something that is demonstrated in *VT*’s statement, which also refutes the notion of “himpathy” (Manne cited in Young 2020). The way in which *VT* has removed Joosten from his role suggests that their citation policy is ethically more conscious than that of Brill’s *JALL*.<sup>8</sup>



## Hypothetical Case Study<sup>9</sup>

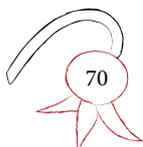
The above analysis of *JIBS*’s policy has highlighted the complexities of putting a policy into practice. When implementing a policy, several challenges arise: separating the scholar from their scholarship; the

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<sup>8</sup> *VT*’s “Instructions for Authors” section does not make reference to a citation ethics policy; see [https://brill.com/fileasset/downloads\\_products/Author\\_Instructions/VT.pdf](https://brill.com/fileasset/downloads_products/Author_Instructions/VT.pdf) (accessed 21 February 2023).

<sup>9</sup> While this hypothetical case study deals with the actions of sexual predators, the levels of criticism that *JIBS*’s policy encourages should be extended to convictions beyond the remit of this article. Our citational ethical practices should be evolving,

repetition of the same authors as a result of hierarchies in academia; and the fact that citation ethics should address what to do regarding people's actions, so that one can inform and educate readers concerning the authors being cited, with whom the latter engage through citations. I will now present a hypothetical case study to test the abilities and limitations of *JIBS*'s policy: a sexual predator is known through the whisper network (and is known to the editors of *JIBS*), but there is no official and public conviction of the person. Should one critically cite them and follow the policy? This is a rather plausible case, as seen for example in Elaine Pagels's (2020, 25) book *Why Religion?*, which narrates how Helmut Koester, Pagel's senior professor at the time, groped her breasts. Before the publication of this book, Koester's actions were known only through the whisper network. He died in 2016, two years before the publication of Pagels's book and was thus never convicted. The possibility that such misbehavior is only known in the whisper network, as was the case with Koester, is something that Pagels describes as an unfairness, which is something early career researchers are all too familiar with as they navigate the whisper networks and hierarchies of their academic circles.



Issues surrounding hierarchical positions are made more complex when Pagels indicates that she had “learned that therapists at the Harvard Health Services, themselves bound to confidentiality about what distressed students reported, called him Koester the Molester” (Pagels 2020, 26–27). The notion of medical confidentiality to which Pagels refers shows the complexities of the Harvard whisper network that contribute to controlling how a student can or cannot interact with Koester's scholarship.

Following *JIBS*'s policy and not “uncritically” citing a predator thus manifests itself differently depending on each author's positionality, and it has to take into account the insecurities of academic careers, especially as the University and College Union's (UCU) March 2022 report states that there has been “a rapid rise in insecure employment” in higher education (UCU 2022: 2). Consequently, a tenured, published

and even with an umbrella policy we should acknowledge the potential of discrepancies or errors that require reworking to encourage a high level of ethics.

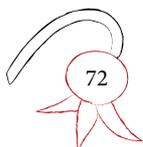
academic has greater freedom in their decision compared to a graduate student or an early career researcher, who rely on journal publication for employment. The privilege to be critical of a predator known only through the whisper network, a privilege gained through job security, can be embodied in a footnote similar to this one: “This person has been accused of x and this paper does not condone their actions by citing them.” As experienced academics, these voices are already respected, and their critical language about citations draws attention to a problem. Alternatively, choosing to not cite predators may go unnoticed, since the focus will be on the scholar’s ideas.

Unfortunately, being critical is not so easy for graduate students, who are of a lower status than their doctoral peers and therefore much more vulnerable. Navigating how to cite a predator known through the whisper network is challenging (Emily Schmidt cited in Urbs and Polis 2021). Pagels herself illuminates the uneven power dynamic and fragility of graduate students’ positions in relation to their superiors, demonstrating the difficulty for early career scholars to engage in critical citational practices (Pagels 2020, 24–25). One way to overcome this challenge is to not cite and to choose somebody else’s work. However, this creates an issue since, by doing so, one might depart from the norms of scholarship. Willie James Jennings (2021) discusses biblical scholarship’s nature as a “white masculinist self-sufficient intellectual form”; any attempt to disrupt this hierarchical “form” is significant, especially for a new scholar. For a graduate student, positionality shapes what it means to critically cite, and it demonstrates the power issues at work in making ethical citational decisions. Publications shape the professional reputation of early career academics, and without them more junior scholars will be less able to be critical. This imbalance of power demonstrates the need for a broader policy that protects the ethical choices of all academics.

Ethically, when scholars become aware of a predator’s transgressions, they are in a difficult situation (even more so if a journal does not have a citational ethics policy) because the choice of how to be critical is essentially their own. The options available to an author, as discussed above, are not to cite, to cite partially, or to cite in a qualified manner. The academic position of an author, and the power that goes with it,



impacts whether one can choose a non-citation (with the attendant risk that it could disrupt hierarchies and affect the likelihood of the author's article being cited) and the level of detail or critique possible in a qualified citation. Because one might need to protect oneself as a scholar, it may not be possible to be as critical as one would ideally like or to avoid giving predators a platform by citing them. In the absence of an umbrella policy, this is an inevitable compromise. Consequently, each author must interpret to what extent they can be critical and adhere to *JIBS's* policy, which makes them vulnerable to external criticism. In this context, such criticism could emanate from the established networks or from more experienced scholars (who themselves do not practice citational ethics). Additionally, scholars who engage in critical citation can be liable to legal criticism, a fear to which we will return.



The question of the potential conviction of a predator adds another layer of complexity to the practice of citational ethics. The complexity and frustration which accompany the threat of libel action in such cases are connected to the fact that, in these cases, the legal burden favors the perpetrator rather than the victim. Having a conviction for every predator is impossible, especially since convictions remain improbable, particularly when they concern someone accused through the whisper network. Without a conviction, it is impossible to cite critically without fear. Thus, the option of non-citation is a more likely action when one considers the risks that accompany exposing someone in the absence of a legal conviction. A 2021 study shows that “fewer than one in 60 rape cases lead to charges in England and Wales.” This statistic hints at the unlikelihood of conviction, which contributes to the pain that victims experience when testifying about their assault (Barr and Topping 2021). Because of the weaknesses in the system that is supposed to convict sexual abusers and because of the persistence of rape culture in academia and higher education, implementing a citational ethics policy that relies on convictions is compromised from the very start (Topping 2021).

In our hypothetical case, the predator, just like Koester, has not been convicted. Thus, citing them critically renders any scholar liable to accusations of libel when such a citation appears in print. To avoid this scenario, it may be best not to use their work, which may not reflect the

scholar's own ethical stance on citation ethics. This may be the preferable option for early career academics. Not mentioning a predator's scholarship avoids discussing the issue and drawing attention to their wrongdoings, but it also means that one is not creating a platform where the victim's voice could be heard. Similarly, it does not initiate a conversation about ethical citations, even though they are essential for meeting ethical standards. Furthermore, even when not citing a *renowned* scholar, citation can still pose a risk to the author, depending on their position in the academic hierarchy. In a more vulnerable position, a qualified citation could be even more damaging to their career.

For a tenured professor, a qualified citation is less risky, and a non-citation allows them to augment the voices of other scholars who may have been silenced, because of the standard practice of always citing the same names. This does not mean that more senior scholars are protected from criticism and that they are sheltered from a negative impact on their career if they choose to be critical. It should be noted, however, that *JIBS's* policy asks for scholars to not be 'uncritical'; thus, a non-citation is still critical, but it ensures the protection of the scholar who chooses to not cite. Due to the complexities and differences in how crimes of sexual violence and pedophilia are dealt with in various regions of the world, it will be difficult to implement a "one size fits all" citational ethics policy. Consequently, it is crucial to take steps that facilitate awareness and being critical. This article has shown the difficulties related to the creation of an umbrella policy for citational ethics, even if that remains the ideal goal. If there are differences in how countries punish the above-mentioned crimes, continuity in citation policies should support victims rather than perpetrators and aim to be more inclusive.



## Conclusion

This article has shown the complexities of putting *JIBS's* policy into practice. More significantly, it has demonstrated that the policy would be more effective and critical if it was not minoritized by the guild in the way it prioritizes citational ethics. In concrete situations, the burden of

being critical relies too heavily on each individual and is affected by the individual's positionality and subjectivity. It also depends on the risks that each individual is willing to take when it comes to their career. Consequently, an umbrella policy would help to protect individuals, especially early career researchers, so they are not negatively impacted when they choose to not cite a predator. This article has shown that ethical standards are generally incongruent with academic standards, and it seeks to encourage a desire to question the latter and to diminish the gap between the latter and the former. The nuances related to these ethical situations limit the answers that can be given; however, challenging the norms of citation practices should be pursued, despite the impossibility of a clear-cut solution.

Beyond suggesting a discipline-wide policy, one can consider how this policy would work and whether a practical guide would be required. The first section has underscored the nuances of *JIBS's* policy: it is not bulletproof; indeed, “*uncritically*” manifests itself differently in each scholar's citations. It would be productive to explore whether there is a way of facilitating citational ethics practices. A policy that guides an individual scholar's citational practices provides tools to be critical, which facilitates the ethical citational process. Example footnotes could be used as a template, removing the fear of using the wrong language when accusing someone or acknowledging that they are a predator, for instance: “X is/has been accused/convicted of y, and this article/book does not support this person or their behavior beyond their scholarship.” It remains true that a template highlights issues from the very start, particularly because it reduces various transgressions to one inadequate sentence.

Ahmed's critical citations could be used as an example. In the “Notes” section of her book, she indicates who she will not cite, and states that this is because she finds their “work so violent and reductive that I have not wished to bring it into the body of my own text” (Ahmed 2017, 269). This reduces the prominence of the discussion yet pursues the debate productively by suggesting recommended reading that counters the work and ideas with which she disagrees and which she chooses not to endorse. The views of these authors are ones that differ from Ahmed's, in the sense that they are “violent” and harmful; therefore, she



does not want to give them a voice in her own work, which questions white patriarchal citational traditions. Ahmed's "Notes" could be replicated in a scholar's explanatory footnotes when justifying non-citation. They would enable the choice to be active in citational ethical debates, especially when forging new paths of scholarship in recommending the work of infrequently cited scholars. When a scholar needs to find other works, it recenters the conversation on social justice and scholarship, thus embodying *JIBS's* aims.

While one could argue that an author does not have to agree with the scholar they cite, when the discussion concerns the ethical transgressions of that scholar, the author has every right to exclude the scholar from their work. By doing so, the author's work can be published and still meet their own ethical practices of citation. One needs to be aware though that, just as knowledge about predators is shared through the whisper network, there are other networks that promote or denigrate scholars' work in the very same academic circles. The dangers from being rejected in these circles is clearer for, and more detrimental to, scholars belonging to racial minorities. Amanda Heidt (2023) discusses a study that demonstrates the undeniable fact that "discrimination against members of under-represented groups in academic publishing leads to lower citation rates, fewer editorial-board positions and longer manuscript-review periods." In this context, simply stating that it is a right for an author to exclude a predator's work is an illusion, and it reveals an idealistic practice of ethical citation that minimizes or ignores the barriers and biases encountered by underrepresented academics, even before citational ethics become a topic of conversation. This is an additional argument concerning the value and the necessity of an umbrella policy that limits the risks of negative consequences for those courageous enough to take a stand and exercise their right to practice citational ethics.



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