

PHILOSOPHY

# THE TRUE REASON FOR RETRACTIONS?

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Retractions are increasing anytime I look around [retraction watch](#). A new [PNAS](#) paper now has the most thorough analysis of retractions:

A detailed review of all 2,047 biomedical and life-science research articles indexed by PubMed as retracted on May 3, 2012 revealed that only 21.3% of retractions were attributable to error. In contrast, 67.4% of retractions were attributable to misconduct, including fraud or suspected fraud (43.4%), duplicate publication (14.2%), and plagiarism (9.8%) ...fraud has increased ~10-fold since 1975.

So, fraud is the most frequent cause – and it usually does not come isolated when we look at the supplemental data provided in the PNAS paper. Why should it be worrisome to all of us? [As a review](#) of the “Great Betrayal” already found:

the most influential academics obtained their seniority from research publications rather than by their teaching or practical skills. To suggest that their positions were attained in a corrupt system reduces their status.