

PHILOSOPHY, SOFTWARE

# I AM A PARASITE TOO

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Jeff Drazen [writes in the NEJM](#)

... a new class of research person will emerge — people who had nothing to do with the design and execution of the study but use another group’s data for their own ends, possibly stealing from the research productivity planned by the data gatherers, or even use the data to try to disprove what the original investigators had posited. There is concern among some front-line researchers that the system will be taken over by what some researchers have characterized as “research parasites.”

[As with other remarks of Jeff Drazen](#), I regard this as a severe misunderstanding of basic scientific principles. Basic science is always a cooperative enterprise: somebody gets the money, somebody designs the study, somebody does the fieldwork, somebody the laboratory analysis, somebody the statistical testing and somebody the writing up of the results. You can only steal something that’s being owned by someone. If I can disprove what an original investigators had posited, isn’t that advanced science? Often a re-analysis is [indispensable for internal reasons](#). [boston.com](#) therefore describes that statement as “paternalistic arrogance”.

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