

Kurt, Jessica: Group 1 -- ATTRIBUTION

Case study from:

<http://155.97.32.9/~bbenham/Phil%207570%20Website/pdfs-Authorship/csAuthorship-Fall08.pdf>

Valerie serves on a review board for an NSF grant competition. While reading a particular grant proposal she encounters a description of a new methodology for studying the very same types of processes that Valerie studies in her lab. The proposal is asking for money to develop this methodology in further detail, and otherwise appears to be a well-designed grant proposal. She thinks the grant should be funded, and votes as such when the time comes. However, Valerie is tempted to use this new methodology in her own lab. She has several graduate students working on similar problems, but she now realizes that the current methodology probably won't produce the desired results. The new methodology appears much more promising. Valerie is a conscientious researcher, but she is conflicted in this case. On the one hand, she feels that her duties as grant reviewer require that she keep the information confidential. Using the methodology would be a clear breach of this obligation. She thought of contacting the researcher who proposed the new methodology, but feels that this too would be a breach of confidentiality. On the other hand, she feels an obligation to her own graduate students and her own research not to unreasonably delay the progress of either. It is clear to her that the current methodology used in her lab won't work, and this new methodology will. Continuing along her current research path with the current methodology will impede the progress of her graduate students' work, and her own research.

Questions:

1. What should Valerie do? To whom is her strongest obligation, her duties as reviewer or her students and her own research?
2. Suppose that without contacting the researcher Valerie decides to adopt the new methodology in her lab and does so with great success. She and her graduate students are ready to publish some findings, but Valerie also realizes that the researcher who proposed the new methodology has not yet published using the new methodology. Should she publish? If so, how should she credit the researcher who developed the new methodology?
3. Suppose that Valerie decides to contact the researcher who proposed the new methodology and asks if she might use it in her own lab, but the researcher is reluctant to let her use it, especially since he hasn't fully perfected it yet, nor published it. He suggests she wait until he publishes on it, probably in a year or so. What should Valerie do in this circumstance?
4. Imagine you are a graduate student in Valerie's lab. Also, suppose that despite her misgivings and the reluctance of the researcher who developed the new methodology Valerie decides to use it anyway. She comes to you and explains that she read about this new methodology while reviewing a grant proposal and thinks that you should adopt this new methodology because it promises better results and will save you much time. What should you do?
5. What if this had been a paper Valerie had read and rejected? How would that change your thinking about what would be appropriate?

Jared, Scott: Group 2 -- AUTHORSHIP WITHIN A LAB

Case modified from:

<http://155.97.32.9/~bbenham/Phil%207570%20Website/pdfs-Authorship/csAuthorship-Fall08.pdf>

Samuel, a second year graduate student at Miskatonic University was upset when he discovered that his name had been left off the penultimate draft of a journal article which he had worked hard at for the last year. Samuel had helped design the experimental approach and even collected some of the initial data. "I was promised the second author slot," complained Samuel. "I don't know what happened. Maybe Professor ABC forgot, or something, but I barely made it on as fourth author." Samuel's expectation that he would be the second author stemmed from seeing an early draft of the manuscript that had been circulated by the first author, a friend of Samuel's, but—unknown to Samuel—his friend had not discussed the authorship list with Prof. ABC prior to its circulation. What Samuel did know was that other grad students had been collaborating with Prof. ABC on the project, but two of the co-authors listed on the final draft were added at the last minute. One was a graduate student just finishing up her degree. She was given second authorship. She was also expected to go on the job market in the coming year. The other was a professor who Samuel suspects did nothing except provide reagents for the experiment. Samuel decides to complain to Prof. ABC that he has been treated unfairly.

Questions.

1. Is Samuel justified in being upset about his place in the list of authors? What legitimate reasons might Prof. ABC have for listing Samuel as the fourth author? What are the criteria for authorship?
2. If Samuel's suspicions about the graduate student and the professor added to the paper are true, is this an appropriate use of authorship? Whose responsibility is it to determine authorship on this paper?
3. Did Samuel do the right thing to confront Prof. ABC? How would you have handled it if you were in the same position as Samuel?
4. Imagine that Samuel is himself about to graduate and plans to go on the job market in the next year. Does this change your assessment of the fairness of this situation? Should it? Explain.

Dianne, Jeff: Group 3 -- POWER DYNAMICS

Juliette was accepted into a doctoral program at Shangrila University. Juliette joined the lab of a very distinguished scientist (Fancy Fellowship Winner, NAS member, amongst a slew of other awards), and was assigned a project that involved developing an in vivo test for the relevance of an exciting in vitro finding. If the in vivo test yielded results consistent with her advisor's hypothesis, it would be a milestone and open up a whole new dimension to the problem with exciting therapeutic applications.

After working on the project for three years, Juliette had failed to collect a data set that was consistent with the hypothesis, and her advisor put a new student on the project. The new student collected data that fit the hypothesis within a year. Her advisor was very enthused and went out of his way to praise the new student's work, while being openly dismissive of Juliette's. Time passed, and by her 5th year, Juliette found herself in a meeting with her advisor, co-worker, and another professor in the department who had a greater ability to critically evaluate the in vivo part of the project than Juliette's advisor. At this stage, Juliette had yet to publish a paper from her graduate work and was getting anxious about her career. When her co-worker presented data that Juliette was concerned rested on shaky assumptions, she spoke up, but her advisor rapidly cut her off. After the meeting, Juliette requested a private meeting with the other professor, who was a member of her committee, to discuss the situation.

Questions.

1. What do you think is at stake here?
2. If you were Juliette, what would you say to your committee member?
3. If you were committee member, what questions would you ask Juliette?
4. What facts are important here? What consequences could there be for different actions? How do you think this situation should be handled?

Tracy, George: Group 4: SOCIAL DYNAMICS WITHIN A LAB INVOLVING GENDER

Case #9 (from Teaching the Responsible Conduct of Research Through a Case Study Approach, Korenman, S.G., and Shipp, A. Eds, © 1994 Association of American Medical Colleges. All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission.)

Lisa is a 26-year-old postdoctoral fellow working in the laboratory of Dr. H. There are three other postdocs in the lab, all men. Her mentor Dr. H, who is forty years Lisa's senior, has an excellent reputation professionally and is extremely well liked by his colleagues. Dr. H has a charming manner and a clever, often self-effacing, sense of humor. Lisa is in general fond of Dr. H and feels lucky to have acquired a position in his lab. Dr. H does have one trait, however, that detracts from his otherwise admirable character. His repertory of humor often includes remarks about women that, in Lisa's view, border on the distasteful. Dr. H's quips make Lisa uncomfortable and, she believes, discourage her colleagues from taking her work seriously. In addition, Dr. H's humor seems to spur the other male postdocs into exchanging jokes and remarks. Nonetheless, given the reputation of the lab, Lisa decides for the time being to do her best to ignore this problem. 13 After Lisa has been in the lab for over a year, a national science meeting for Lisa's discipline is held. Dr. H decides that Lisa has the most to gain of all his fellows by attending. Lisa is delighted, but her fellow postdocs are clearly and understandably disappointed. One day Lisa overhears two of her male colleagues joking among themselves that Dr. H has other than scientific intentions for this meeting. Their comments also suggest that Lisa has done something inappropriate to curry favor with her mentor. Upon overhearing similar remarks on several more occasions, Lisa confronts her colleagues, who retort, "Well, there are certain advantages to being a woman, aren't there?" Lisa feels offended and angry and wishes to pursue the matter further. However, she finds the situation too embarrassing and awkward to discuss with Dr. H, and she is uncertain what repercussions such a discussion would have on her career.

Questions.

1. Do Dr. H's actions create a hostile environment for women? Why or why not? Would you characterize these actions as sexual harassment? Do the actions of Lisa's fellow postdocs qualify as sexual harassment? Why or why not?
2. How might this sort of atmosphere in the laboratory be avoided? Now that the current situation exists, how might it be improved under these circumstances?
3. Should Dr. H be held accountable for the behavior of Lisa's colleagues? Why or why not?
4. Given the awkwardness of discussing the matter with Dr. H, and her affection for him otherwise, how might Lisa follow up on her concerns? What support should she have available to her?