**Research Ethics Interactive Exercise**

**Conversation Challenge: Discussing Authorship**

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Chances are sometime in your life you will be involved in a research collaboration that has the potential to produce a published article, book, or other form of publication. One question that will inevitably come up in the collaboration is the question of authorship, and in particular, the order of authorship. Different disciplines have different standards for authorship order, but all agree that it is important to discuss this question as early in the research process as possible. The following interactive exercise simulates such a discussion by having you and one of your classmates play different roles in research project. In this Conversation Challenge, you will engage in a discussion about authorship on future publications coming out of new research project as either a faculty member or undergraduate researcher.

***The Conversation Challenge***

In this exercise, you will either play Dr. Charles Green, a professor and Primary Investigator for a research project that is just beginning, or Lala Brown, an undergraduate student who has been hired as a research assistant on the project. Lala’s job description indicates she will be responsible for conducting a literature review for the project, entering data collected into the computer, and contributing her ideas to the project. Dr. Green is responsible for supervising the project, and plans to do most of the data analysis and writing of the ensuing publications. Lala is interested in going to graduate school, and would very much like to be included as an author on any publications that come out of this project as she knows that will help her application. She is nervous about asking Dr. Green about this issue though. Her older brother encourages her to do so given some bad experiences he had as a grad student, and so she decides to visit Dr. Green’s office hours to discuss the issue. She does some research ahead of time, and prepares to enter his office. Dr. Green is happy to have Lala working on the project, but is concerned about what precedents might be set by this discussion. You and your classmate will simulate this conversation…

***Tips for Lala:*** You enjoyed the class you took with Dr. Green last semester, and are excited about this opportunity to work with him on this project. You want to start the research project on the right foot with him, but you also know that it is good to be clear upfront about authorship and acknowledgement expectations. What specifically would you like to get out of this conversation with him? What do you think is a reasonable request? You do some research on authorship expectations beforehand, and write down some notes about what you think is standard and fair as you begin to work on this exciting project.

***Tips for Dr. Green:*** You have heard some horror stories of students demanding to get authorship when they clearly deserve it, but you have also heard stories of faculty members blatantly not acknowledging their students’ contributions to their work. What is fair in this context? Lala had mentioned in her email that she wanted to talk about authorship, so you do a little research on the topic before she arrives for office hours. What precedent do you want to set for future work with students? What standard of contribution should be met to be an author on a paper? Knowing that students often lose interest in projects and the quality of their work can be highly variable, you want to have guidelines that are both clear and flexible. You jot down some notes from your research to prepare for Lala’s visit.

**Resources for Students**

* National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine. [On Being a Scientist: Responsible Conduct in Research, Second Edition ( 1995 )](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=4917). Authorship Practices. <http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=4917&page=13> (p. 13-15).
* Harvard Medical School. Authorship Guidelines. <http://hms.harvard.edu/about-hms/integrity-academic-medicine/hms-policy/faculty-policies-integrity-science/authorship-guidelines>
* Columbia University. Responsible Conduct of Research Responsible Authorship and Peer Review (Case Study 1). <http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/rcr/rcr_authorship/introduction/index.html>
* Jaschik, Scott. 2010. The New Poli Sci Collaboration. <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/02/25/polisci>
* Jaschik, Scott. 2007. Who Gets Credit? <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/07/20/credit>
* Whitbeck, Caroline. Online Ethics Center. Responsible Authorship. <http://www.onlineethics.org/cms/research/modindex/auth.aspx>
* American Psychological Association. Publication Practices & Responsible Authorship. <http://www.apa.org/research/responsible/publication/index.aspx>
* APA Science Student Council. A Graduate Student’s Guide to Determining Authorship Credit and Authorship Order [www.apa.org/science/leadership/students/**authorship**-paper.pdf](http://www.apa.org/science/leadership/students/authorship-paper.pdf) ‎
* Authorder.com. What rules determine authorship on publications? <http://www.authorder.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=47>

**Notes to Exercise Facilitators**

* Depending on the context of the exercise, feel free to add more details to it. You might specify the professor’s discipline they are in, for example, or change the nature of their respective assignments.
* Distribute the assignment the class before you plan to hold the exercise. To ensure an equal number of both roles are assigned, give out two versions of the assignment – one with the tips for Lala and one with the tips for Dr. Green.
* Encourage students to review the assignment and do some online research using the links above. Feel free to reduce or add this list as you see fit. Authorship guidelines differ by discipline, but there are some general principles that these references try to capture – the Harvard Medical School link is particularly useful in this regard.
* Once they are back in class, have students break up into pairs of students and faculty members. Give them 10-15 minutes or so to have their simulated conversation. For those who finish early, ask them to clarify the details of their arrangement.
* Ask students to report to the class about the simulation experience. Be sure to hear from students who played both roles.
* Summarize some general principles of responsible authorship that the students can remember. Ask them to help you clarify the take-home messages from the role-playing exercise.
* Consider supplementing this exercise with an analysis of a specific case study, such as the one listed above provided by Columbia University.

