



Case 2: Collaboration

Bill, a graduate student, seeks advice about a problem with his thesis advisor from Professor John Smith, who is a member of his thesis committee. As John knows, Bill and his thesis advisor have a difficult relationship. The causes are not entirely clear, but Bill is a very independent student, and the thesis advisor is known for his monumental lack of tact in dealing with students. Nevertheless, the work done in the thesis advisor's lab is exciting and innovative, and Bill's project, in particular, has been highly successful.

Bill's question is this: He is preparing a paper reporting part of his thesis work. His good friend, Kim, who is a graduate student in a lab doing related work, has helped him a lot with the paper. She has critiqued it from the initial draft, suggested an additional control experiment that Bill considers very helpful in presenting the results, and helped Bill to draft the discussion section. Because of these contributions, Bill has offered her co-authorship. However, this offer has been rescinded by his thesis advisor, who states Kim has no claim to authorship, and, further, that he objects to her having been involved in this way, "behind his back" without his knowledge or permission. Bill feels that to deny her authorship is tantamount to plagiarism.

- He asks what he should do.



Case 2: Variations Collaboration

The following variations of this case can be used to explore the issues further.

- Early on, Bill had mentioned to his advisor that his friend Kim had suggested a technique that had been helpful in performing some difficult experiments. Without her suggestion Bill wasn't sure he would have been able to get the necessary data. His advisor had responded saying "Well, that's what science is about. We become better scientists through sharing ideas with other scientists." By this comment, Bill understood his advisor to be encouraging collaboration.
- The scenario is the same as the first variation except that Bill was unable to perform the technique Kim had suggested. Kim offered to show Bill how to do it and together the two of them completed the series of experiments. The authorship Bill wishes to extend to Kim recognizes her contribution to the production of the data as well as her methodological suggestions.
- Bill's advisor reminds Bill that Hank R. has been helpful by supplying necessary materials for the experiments, materials without which Bill would not have been able to complete his work. Hank also has some materials that Bill's advisor would like for another set of experiments a different student in his lab wants to begin. He puts Hank's name on the paper as an author despite Bill's protests that Hank has not contributed intellectually to the paper.
- English is Bill's second language and at times he has difficulty polishing his writing. Having been chastised by his advisor for the "unprofessional" writing of some early drafts he asks Kim for her help in writing this paper. The help Bill needs goes beyond copy-editing and Kim really composes the majority of the paper for Bill.