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# Authorship Problems

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**Sunil Mukhi**

**Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, India**

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- Definition of an Author
- Authorship Misconduct
- Role of Journal

# Definition of an Author

- **Notional understanding:**
  - Author = One who contributed significantly to the research being published.
- **Some common practices:**
  - Large experimental collaborations: Out of 500 authors, one might expect large variations in the degree and amount of research contribution. Might some of the “co-authors” not have even read the paper carefully?

# Definition of an Author

- **Some common practices (contd):**
  - Experiments with samples: The provider of a sample (e.g. crystal, meteorite, mouse) is frequently a **co-author of every paper** based on work done with that sample.
  - The guide of a student, or a lab director: Sometimes this person is listed as a co-author on **every paper** written by that student, or from that lab.

# Definition of an Author

- Has the **definition** of authorship **changed** over the years?
- Should this be **formalised/codified**?

# Authorship Misconduct

- Forced inclusion: Senior worker (e.g. guide or lab director) **forces coworkers** to make him/her a co-author **even when not appropriate**. Sometimes he/she **does not know** the details of what is in the paper, or **isn't even qualified in the field**.
- Forced exclusion: Senior worker **removes coworker's name** from paper, though the latter was expecting to be an author.
- Inclusion without knowledge/consent: Junior workers **add a senior author's name** hoping to gain easier acceptance of the paper, or other benefit.

# Authorship Misconduct

These situations admit considerable variation in the degree of acceptability.

- Senior workers: Might genuinely be the best judge of who should/should not be an author. At the other extreme, the senior member may act from narrow self-interest and personal bias.
- Junior workers: May genuinely feel a senior colleague's inclusion is appropriate, despite a relatively “small” contribution. But others might cynically include a name for their personal benefit. Depending on prevalent sociology, they may also assume they are required to add senior's name.

# Authorship Misconduct

- Lifting from student's thesis: A scientist took an entire chapter of his student's Ph.D. thesis and submitted it **verbatim** as a review article under his own name.

In this example, the student said he had no objection!



# Role of Journal

- Detection: Require signed statement from **all** authors?
- Inquiry: Investigate pro-actively, or only following a complaint?
- Response: How to **respond** when a case is detected? (see also **punishment** session). Can journals **share information**? **Defamation** issues?

# Plagiarism Website

[http://www.geocities.com/physics\\_plagiarism](http://www.geocities.com/physics_plagiarism)