Cooper
October 16, 2015

Physics 596 – Fall 2015

Scientific Ethics Case Study #3*

"I'm a grad student in physics. I recently stopped working for an advisor who always talks about publishing to motivate his students, but rarely publishes any of the work they do. Whenever a student completes some set of measurements and analysis that the professor had previously agreed should constitute a paper, that student is told that he cannot publish. The reasons given are as diverse as they are mysterious: "Oh. That wasn't the goal of the project anymore. Didn't I tell you?", "The results are good, but since I want to sell these widgets, I don't want to give away the secrets of their fabrication.", and "Hey let's hold off on writing for a while so we can get started on this other project!" The reason given is rarely scientific. I spent about a year on one particular project. When I finished and wanted to publish I was given the usual runaround. I feel that the work is worthy of publishing and I'd hate to simply forget about it. Would it be legal and ethical for me to publish a paper on the work on my own? Does my former advisor have any legal authority to block it, or control its content? (He obtained the funding, and is responsible for the lab where the experiment took place.) Should I include his name on the paper? Would it be legal and ethical for me to include or exclude his name against his will? His participation in the project was minimal."

***Before discussing the case:** Identify people in the group for the following presentation duties: (i) A person to present the 'case' in their own words to the rest of the class; (ii) a person to present one point of view in this study; (iii) a person to present the opposing point of view; and (iv) a person to lead a class discussion of the case. Feel free to take notes as necessary to present your discussions to the class.

Take 15-20 minutes to discuss this case study and prepare to relate your discussions to the rest of the class. Consider the questions raised by the grad student as discussion topics.