Data Management

Role Play:

This is a 3-person role play involving a doctoral student, his mentor and a former professor (trusted other)

Roles:

Student

Mentor

Former Professor (Trusted Other)

Character Description:

Student

You are a doctoral student. You are struggling to produce an important paper that is your dissertation, and are concerned that your research with your Professor is not proving as successful as you had hoped. You have looked forward to getting your PhD and getting full employment. You are wondering what you are going to do if your current work does not provide the kind of results that will be publishable and serve as an acceptable dissertation project. As always, you want to discuss these problems with your professor. You go to your professor’s office. It is late, but the light is on and the door is open. Your professor is not there, though. You go in to wait. You can see his draft of the next grant proposal on his desk. Figuring it would be better to spend the time proofreading the grant proposal than sitting around twiddling your thumbs, you begin reading and are horrified to discover that the part with the data you gathered has been doctored to show the results you had hoped for, not the results you have, in fact, found.

Character Description:

Mentor

You are an Assistant Professor who is regarded as a good performer in your field. You spend a lot of time mentoring your students, and believe that they look to you as a role model. Your doctoral student who is something of a perfectionist and is taking forever to finish up his data analysis for the grant proposal you are ready to submit. This grant is very important to your promotion and tenure. You look at the nearly finished grant proposal that awaits just the data analyses that would give you a very powerful proposal… and realize that the data analyses are not turning out. At the end of your rope, you revise the data you have and enter the desired results into the proposal. You just need to put a few more finishing touches on the proposal and give it to your Sponsored Projects Office to submit.

Character Description:

Trusted Other

You are the doctoral student’s favorite professor from undergraduate studies at a nearby research university. The doctoral student has contacted you via email and then by phone to discuss a matter that has recently come up in his/her present research. You have been in regular contact with the doctoral student throughout his/her education and know that he is very close to finishing the Ph.D. (in the fifth year of study). You are worried about the matter which s/he wants to discuss. You do not know the doctoral student’s mentor personally but have heard from others that he is a highly respected individual; collaborating researchers and the doctoral student himself  have only said positive things to you about the mentor’s incredible work ethic and how he seems genuinely concerned about the welfare of his graduate students. You are unsure what to think as the doctoral student comes to you in a panic over what he saw in the grant proposal.

*Scenario*

*Mentor:* “Come in, come in, I think we need to clear up this little misunderstanding. The data you saw in here were slightly altered, but only to illustrate a sample with sufficient power to support our hypotheses. Those data were never meant to be included in the final grant proposal.”

*Student: How do you respond?*