



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# The Family Problem

## Author(s)

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## Year

2000

## Description

A scenario designed to stimulate discussion about ethical aspects of the supervisor-trainee relationship and family responsibilities.

## Body

Student Star, who has been well-groomed by Professor Academic, is married and his wife is expecting their second child. Student Star now realizes he would like to take a job in industry so he can better support his growing family. However, Professor Academic has let it be known that he wants Star to continue in academia, carrying on the important work they've begun together, and now says that all he really knows is Star's outstanding contributions to the work they have been doing, so that his recommendation of Star for an industry position cannot be very strong.

- What, if anything, should Student Star do?

## Alternate Version

Student Star is a married woman who discovers she is pregnant. She intends to carry on with her academic career through her pregnancy and after the child is born, but she feels subtly discouraged by comments made by Professor Academic and/or others in the research lab.

As she enters the lab one day Star overhears Professor Academic and Professor Oldschool shaking their heads and lamenting how much "promise" she had and that she is throwing away her chances for an academic career by getting pregnant.

- How should Student Star communicate her desire to be treated just the same and given the opportunities she earned?
- How, if at all, would the situation change if, instead of pregnancy, the issue were one of divorce? dying parents? sick family members?

## **Notes**

Caroline Whitbeck introduced methods and modules for discussing numerous issues in responsible conduct of research at a Sigma Xi Forum in 2000. Partial funding for the development of this material came from an NIH grant.

You can find the entire sequence on the OEC at [Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#). Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.

## **Contributor(s)**

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## **Resource Type**

Case Study / Scenario

## **Parent Collection**

Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research

## **Topics**

Diversity

Organizational Climate

## **Discipline(s)**

Research Ethics

## **Publisher**

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