

Case Study #1 (adapted from Ervin, 1995)

Sarah is a PhD student working for Paula. At first, they had positive personal and professional relationships. However, as Sarah continued in her PhD, her relationship with Paula became toxic. Paula demanded Sarah's help in both professional and personal matters. She had Sarah write her academic papers (without including her as a co-author). She also required Sarah to babysit and pet-sit for free while she was traveling and run errands like going to the grocery and picking up laundry. Paula refused to sign needed forms and aid Sarah in her research unless she complied. Sarah felt powerless and trapped. She went to the head of the department for help. However, the department head told her that her situation couldn't be that bad. He said that Paula was always talking about how wonderful their relationship was, and how much time and effort she invested in mentoring Sarah. As a result, Sarah felt even more disempowered and often contemplated dropping out of graduate school.

Case Study #2 (adapted from Ervin, 1995)

Debbie is a new faculty member at a university. After having a somewhat absent male PhD advisor, she chose a female faculty mentor, Alice. At first, Debbie felt that Alice was a positive mentor who helped her navigate her new position. However, this eventually began to change. Alice invited Debbie over to discuss ways to improve the graduate program, and Debbie openly shared several of her ideas. The following week, Debbie received a department-wide faculty email from the department head with proposed ideas about improving the program, most of which had come from Debbie. The ideas were cited as being from Alice, with help from Debbie. She also noticed that Alice started encouraging her to take her research in a direction that could ultimately be more beneficial for Alice than for Debbie.

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Case Study #3 (adapted from MIT mentor case studies)

Jay is an undergrad working for Jared, a graduate student. He's a talented undergraduate student, but he is extremely reserved. As he spends more time in the lab, he becomes increasingly skilled and produced high quality data that ultimately results in his inclusion on a publication. Despite his growth and success, Jay remains reserved. Jared tries to encourage him to express himself but is unsuccessful. Eventually, Jared becomes frustrated at the lack of feedback regarding his role as a mentor and began to resent Jay. After a year of working together, Jay confides in Jared that a previous graduate mentor had told him that he was incompetent and would never be a successful scientist when he provided input on an experiment. He says that since then, he has been hesitant to provide input in any setting (classroom, in the lab, with his roommates, etc.). Jared doesn't know how to respond and feels guilty for feeling resentment.

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