

Overturning Intentional Barriers to Participation

Thematic Areas: 1. ☒ State of the Profession 2. Ethics and Behavior. 3. Sociology of Science 4. Cognition of the brain as a scientific instrument. 4. Planetary Systems: Has origin in the activity of studying exoplanets.

Stuart F. Taylor

Participation Worldscope

astrostuart@gmail.com; (+852) 9847-0748

Sheung Wan, Hong Kong, SAR PRC and Sedona, Arizona, USA

Abstract

The astronomy community is badly failing its obligation to protect the participation of scientists. This includes not causing arbitrary trouble for scientists to continue both in their current works and groups, and in support for them progressing to new employment and collaborative groups. Instead, the astronomy community has engaged in censoring essential scientific reporting of anti-inclusive behavior by science managers by retaliating against those who work to report misbehavior by powerful members of the community. The community lacks any mechanism to study this issue, instead pressuring members to cover up the serious harm done to science by obstructive behaviors. It is essential that the community address how to correct destructive behaviors by manages, starting with creating mechanisms to scientifically study dysfunctional usages of people. If we are good scientists, then we must recognize how the social science study of the behavior of astronomers is an essential part of performing our scientific activities.

I. Introduction

It is of the highest importance to the conduct of science that the rights of scientists to participate be protected. It must be one of the top obligations of scientists to protect the participation rights of their fellow scientists. It is of the same level of importance as honestly reporting results, indeed, crediting fellow scientists contributions is as important as reporting any other result. Science is obstructed unless it becomes recognized that scientists have the rights to continue their scientific work against arbitrary obstruction, both by staying in their projects and by using their previous work to join new projects. Scientists have the right to report all aspects of their efforts to participate against arbitrary censorship, including the right to report their observation of other scientists creating any obstruction to participation. The right to report must be especially protected when any pressure is applied to cover up the embarrassment of a managing official who perpetrates creating obstacles to target a scientist's participation. The science community is obliged to study and disseminate the behavior of those managing science to promote optimum participation and performance by every person engaged in science.

II. Discussion of issues stopping participation

Nothing could be more self-evidently destructive to the performance of science than intentionally disrupting someone's performance of science in acts of retaliation. One of the strongest taboos taught to scientist is to present honest results, yet this taboo is routinely ignored not only by bad managers in cases of giving credit to other scientists, but it is also ignored by many collaborative groups, and by many journals as well. Misreporting of results on, for example, the performance of a mechanical instrument, would be quickly condemned for its dishonesty. Covering up a mechanical failing would be detrimental to correcting the operation of such instruments. The result is the same for covering up human failings: the destructive and misleading behaviors are propagated, and a valuable opportunity to prevent future destructive practices is missed, resulting in future victims unnecessarily suffering disrupted performance. The scientific record then becomes full of misrepresented results in the author lists, and the scientific community loses the valuable contributions from those scientists targeted for retaliation and exclusion. Intentionally exclusionary behavior is the most self-evidently anti-inclusive behavior, such that the failure of the current management of astronomy to correct such behaviors represents a serious failure of the science community to make good on its self-professed social responsibility towards being inclusive. Until this is corrected, we report that the current "State of the Profession" of astronomy is "toxic".

We promote that any blatant exclusion of any one person, whether started for discriminatory reasons or not, must be opposed at all levels by any scientific community. It is shocking how such behavior is commonly claimed to not be restricted

by established ethics when it clearly goes against normal practice in science. The allowance of such behavior leads to managers easily blackmailing subordinates to suffer all sorts of unacceptable behavior. The reliance on non-discrimination statutes to judge whether keeping someone out lead to unreasonable difficulty in establishing motive for a behavior that should be considered unconscionable on its face.

To arbitrarily force a targeted scientist to give up the benefit of having contributed to a project while a member deprives the target of due opportunity to stay in science. The experience of the author is that it is unreasonable to leave trying to create a replacement project as the only option for an observing astronomer to stay in astronomy. Because of the experience of finding those with access to observing data too unwilling to share their data, we advocate that the funders and publishers that are the gatekeepers must enforce ethical behavior in the same way that they enforce honest paper writing.

We promote the establishment of the prohibition of three behaviors, to be enforced by all gatekeepers, that we name “three taboos” as part of a community statement of ethics:

1. Stopping work by expulsion or blocking access to data
2. Disrupting progressing impeding engaging with groups who might value someone having experiences with the target’s current group, whether these groups are collaborating groups or new groups. There can be no pressure to make the targeted person accept putting some distance from any group she wishes to maintain her relationship with. The only way to accomplish this is to start with requiring all groups to not engage in arbitrary expulsions.
3. Censoring reporting of retaliation, abuse, or any disruption of scientific activity or participation (whether by obstruction of resources or sociability).

More positively, we rephrase these three taboos as “Three Protected Activities”:

1. Continuing research already started on, including continuing with current groups and reaching out to join new groups. All groups must protect these options by supporting efforts to return to any work unwillingly separated from.
2. Seeking new employment, participation, and support by bringing experiences of completing, continuing, and presenting current work with all possible credit.
3. Reporting of any disruption of scientific activity or participation, including for purposes for study of behavior, for taking back blocked activity and credit, and for general expression and discussion of the experiences of scientists. This includes protection of telling the stories of experiences in science in whatever forum where reporting observation and telling stories are performed, from panel discussions to variations of prepared dramatic storytelling. The right to present reports of events and opinions must be particularly protected against those who seek to avoid embarrassing leaders or funders. The only exception to the right to embarrass can only cover truly private issues that did not create any targeted victims. Privacy rights must protect private activities, but when anyone with power over a scientist harms that scientist, then that scientist has full right to report the harm in ways that embarrasses the perpetrator and the perpetrator’s supporters.

The gatekeepers of astronomy have the primary responsibility to enforce these three essential guidelines to behavior. The primary gatekeepers are the funders, who must require that all those who receive their support protect these essential activities, whether the recipients are researchers or organizations that engage in research. No funding should become part of supporting behavior that violates these three taboos, regardless of if the organization wants to claim it is private. Attendance at activities or submissions to entities where these taboos are not respected should be supported. This must specifically apply to journals and professional organizations, which should be in the lead in establishing ethics, because these entities too easily enter into covering up dishonest and exclusionary behavior of those bringing in financial support.

Journals must treat author lists as having the same sacred respect for honest reporting of results as the rest of the paper. Scientific papers that are said to have gone through peer review not only represent reports of observations of the physical world, but at the top, report the group's observation of the names of the human instruments that are being presented to have been successful in producing scientific results. An omission of a name misrepresents that person as having failed to succeed in her/his effort to contribute to the group. Any intentional omission of any names of any contributor must be regarded as bringing the same rejection of the honesty of the paper as would omitting reporting the true nature of the ability of a mechanical instrument to make measurements.

The dishonesty of keeping out an author targeted for ostracism cannot be considered legitimate peer review: It is actually "Fraudulent Peer Review". Any truly peer reviewed paper must go through two rounds of peer review, the first being the review of the authors. The ability of controlling authors to arbitrarily remove other authors means that the controlling author can hide any other authors' scientific objections to the paper by removing them from the finishing of the paper. Journals must not allow a controlling or submitting author to misrepresent who has been part of the full project, under penalty of withdrawing peer review certification should anyone be forced off.

The question of who is the first author can also become fraudulent if the entity controlling the group or the data arbitrarily decrees that a targeted person is to be removed from the author list. Thus the listed first author may not actually be the *original* first author.

Recommendation: Advocate establishment of a single government-wide "Office of Integrity" to advise the separate funding agencies on how to require preventing any anti-inclusive behavior. The US should have one national office, and the international community should set up an international office.

Recommendation to Journals: Require honest presentation that all contributing authors have had due opportunity to participate in the production of the paper to all the way to reviewing the submitted work. Better procedures may need to be established in cases of disagreement over details of the paper, but no dispute can be considered to be honestly solved if an employer arbitrarily expels one member and stops their work on the paper.

Recommendation to Collaborative groups: Institutions such as universities should enable their staff to take ethical issues from outside the university and still evaluate them. Scientists in badly run institutions need to be able to report to other institutions as a current provisional measure. The better answer is for the community to have the office of integrity mentioned above.

Recommendation: Protect rights of expression to report and discuss harassment, bullying, ostracism and similar abuses by banning retaliatory behavior such as keeping someone out for reporting behavior that disrupts performing science. The right to express opposition to being forced out includes the right to embarrass bad management by reporting harassment, ostracism, and other abuses. Bad management that disrupts participation is not private behavior that can be covered up, so anyone should help the perpetrators avoid embarrassment. Truly private behavior that does not involve the group or that is irrelevant to professional activity must be kept private. No one can have their private activity distorted into wrongful professional issues in any manner detrimental to their participation.

The right to express emotional distress at being targets in supported venues, from panels to storytelling, must be protected. Freedom of expression using embarrassment as a form of protest against behavior harmful to the conduct of science must be held sacred. No presentation of actual managerial behavior can ever be covered up to relieve a manager from embarrassment.

The concept of non-disparagement cannot be used to cover up managerial behaviors requiring correction, but must apply firstly to protecting each scientist's legitimate right to seek new opportunities. Nothing can be more wrongfully disparaging to a scientist than misrepresenting her/him to not be an author.

III. Damages caused by being targeted for exclusion

In cases of keeping a due author off a paper, perhaps worse than losing essential credit is losing the actual experience of being part of producing the scientific result. Thus an original first author may be caused to not have written a large part of a paper that she/he might have started. This does not mean the targeted author need relinquish the option to be credited with the major part of the paper, as such behavior cannot relieve the offending group of the responsibility to give full opportunity to every member of the group to make the most of projects they have started.

This damage to a person's experience itself has multiple parts. From losing the due opportunity to continue with the setup and the early learning of the project, the kept out person must then seek out replacement activities. This effort to find replacements is itself hindered by obstruction of credit, so that no other group wants the target person. This person then becomes the victim of not being able to continue science but the only option to stay in science is to be forced to go through the logistical difficulty of finding new data, new groups, and new support. Each of these additional logistical difficulties becomes defeating to overcoming the problem alone.

The result is that a targeted person's mind is handicapped from learning science. This handicap is firstly the logistics of having to learn through a much more complicated process. Being human, the targeted person will inevitably suffer the additional handicap cognitive and emotional breakdown.

These impacts of being forced out must be addressed as a workplace induced medical handicap. The community must support targeted individuals to obtain relief from being pushed out by arranging suitable reentry, along with supporting medical treatment to address learning difficulties created by obstructing the natural path of developing essential knowledge and skills.

The only way to heal the damage caused by pushing someone from a group is to arrange for both options of returning to the same group while also establishing a "sanctuary" group to which the victim may obtain relief from the hostile group. When the victim does not choose to leave a group, however, the group is obliged to not continue its ostracism by arranging for a return to participation.

Study of ostracism and related social manipulation issues with an eye to providing support and correction to affected individuals is essential. It is essential that part of all general science funding be targeted at restoring the disrupted opportunities due any scientists wrongly driven from her/his projects and groups. Regulations must exist to enable such persons to call upon the funding of misbehaving groups.

IV. Specific case of exclusion

We report briefly on the specific exclusion that has forced the principle author to have to fight for being included in order to not be forced from exoplanet astronomy. It is an important part of this effort to restore inclusion into papers that have been supposedly published from work coming from his observatory.

In order to restore his publications, it is impossible to leave out the relevant names because the papers on which the missing author has been kept off of must be identified if credit is to be restored: This is an effort to restore the credit and participation of S.F. Taylor into papers which have authors affiliated with LCOGT, and often UCSB, which have followed from Taylor having started the exoplanet transit observation program at LCOGT to confirm exoplanets and to characterize exoplanet transits. Papers on the LCOGT network, other photometry including of mutual events of outer planet satellites, and other photometry also require Taylor's participation and attribution in order to not have fraudulent peer review. It is also an effort to restore the name of Taylor and to require the acceptance of contributions to those papers by Taylor.

For many years, this author has had to apply for employment with being deprived of simply submitting a list of these papers. The result has been no one considers hiring him with a count of zero papers from working with this observatory. It is essential that the attributions on these papers be corrected in order for the victim of this ostracism be hired anywhere in astronomy. It is therefore required that the target identify the papers being so challenged, which requires the identification of LCOGT as being the observatory “company” and UCSB being the university which has been ostracizing one essential author. We present that the claim of peer review by these authors, at least for a reasonable fraction of these papers that include contributions derived from the work of Taylor, is fraudulent.

We specifically cite that the paper on the LCOGT network, printed in 2013, was started as a paper by Taylor in 2007 following the similar talks on the LCOGT network started by Taylor in 2006. Despite this and despite Taylor having made significant contributions to the network, a later author chose to take this work for himself and to misrepresent Taylor as not having been an author by not listing his name among the authors, ignoring how there others listed who clearly had contributed much less. It was sheer retaliation that Brown put the misspelled name of Taylor (ignoring his standard use of his middle initial to reduce confusion) in the acknowledgements. The journal, PASP, refused to even evaluate the integrity of the author list. The version printed in PASP is a misrepresentation of the actual contributors, and the supposed peer review is fraudulent by how it does not reveal that there is a dispute regarding the paper’s integrity. The opportunity to be an author, even first author, is not relinquished by Taylor, hence, we honor that right by listing Taylor as the first author in the references, as Taylor and then T.B. Brown (2013) in the references. The version printed by PASP is but a draft as Taylor rejects the paper in its current form.

In addition to being kept out of network paper, Taylor was papers on observing exoplanet transits to confirm and characterize the exoplanet/star parameters. Along with LCOGT keeping out Taylor, it also cannot be avoided to mention that UCSB has avoided managing the ethical issues of the company, LCOGT, even though LCOGT promotes its association with UCSB.

Many of these issues were previously been reported in Taylor (2009), a “State of the Profession” submission to the decadal review ten years ago.

We leave more specifics of how Taylor was excluded by not only by LCOGT but also by UCSB for upcoming postings to the project page on Research Gate.

VI. Project Website

We have created an online “project page” on Research Gate to manage discussion of efforts to overturn and reverse anti-inclusive and censoring behavior, at:

<https://www.researchgate.net/project/Participation-Rights>

This page is for organizing the study of the sociology of anti-inclusive behavior, and to promote participation, and to overcome and reverse censorship. It will promulgate the reporting of experiencing pressure to reduce participation, and promote the importance of reporting and expressing experiences of pressures to either wrongly change participation or to cover up talking or writing about such experiences.

VII. Concluding Recommendations

While in the U.S. there exist offices in the various funding agencies to take complaints, these offices are limited in their effectiveness by being separated across the federal government and by only being able to enforce previously narrowly defined discrimination complaints, such as those specifically prohibited in civil rights, disability, and similar laws. However, there is no good reason for any arbitrary expulsion of any member.

We note that the NSF has specific policy language disallowing denial in a discriminatory manner by its grant recipients of any benefit of federal funding. We encourage NASA to similarly express that it follows similar policies to not support anti-inclusive behavior of any kind. We urge all the agencies employing science to put in place better protections against anti-inclusive practices including protection of reporting and expressing the experience of being targeted for exclusion.

Recommendation: Establish a central office of research integrity across government.

Recommendation: Complaint offices must protect participation and credit, rather than only protection of employment, because the only route to employment in astronomy is to gain experience through participating, and receiving credit for that experience.

Recommendation: Protection must be given for reporting disruptions of participation or research and other misconduct. The performance of honest science requires support for freedom of expression, to report managing behavior that is adverse to the progress of those they manage.

Recommendation: Institutions must assist their members who find themselves in groups with misbehaving members. The offices of universities that deal with research integrity

must be available to due co-authors. All the universities who have staff on a paper have an interest in supporting the integrity of all the results on papers, including the author list. However, a university such as UCSB that has a major affiliation with a smaller research organization that lacks a viable office of research integrity has a greater responsibility to uphold the integrity of the research. Any university such as UCSB that arranges affiliations with staff of a smaller organization must take full responsibility for the actions of those affiliated with it. It is especially imperative that such persons be fully encouraged to stand up to their employers should the employer act unethically.

Recommendation: Journals requiring that peer review require the honest promotion of participation up to review of the papers by all due authors.

Recommendation: We must study ourselves, as groups performing research, and as individuals learning and developing skills while performing research. A valuable opportunity is being missed to study the social behavior of groups engaged in science as well as studying the function of the human cognitive instrument engaged in learning. Plans must be established to study ourselves. Failure to study and correct our worst behaviors will waste what could be one of the most valuable products of studying science.

Unless the astronomy community takes action to protect the participation of its junior members, the credibility of the results printed as being “peer reviewed” will be questionable. There is no reason to expect junior members to tolerate management that is destructive to the progress of individuals chosen as targets to be kept out. Until procedures are implemented to empower junior members to report and reverse ostracism, we must report that an honest assessment is that the State of the Profession of Astronomy is “toxic”.

Acknowledgements

It is not possible to name every person who has helped with trying to deal with being targeted for being kept out. It is unfortunate that the common support of retaliatory behavior makes it of uncertain benefit to mention the names of those who have been helpful. Those who at UCSB who were helpful have mentioned that they were concerned that LCOGT would withhold support if their assistance were known. We will, however, credit John Huchra for suggesting that the report of Taylor (2009) of the experiences of being targeted for being forced to leave research be submitted to the Decadal Review as a report on the State of the Profession.

References

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Study project page:

<https://www.researchgate.net/project/Participation-Rights>