

# Research Methods and Professional Practice

## June 2022

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### « [Collaborative Learning Discussion 2](#)



[Hendrik Van Rooyen](#)

#### Initial Post

32 days ago

3 replies



Last 19 days ago

“Scientists should report the truth, nothing more and nothing less” (Shamoo & Resnik, 2009). Furthermore, the authors state that openness is a key principle in research ethics. With this in mind, I think Abi should present both the positive and negative analyses, if those results were concluded from his method, which seems to be the case.

Regarding how the data is used, it is up to Abi to decide if he will pursue any further actions. Shamoo & Resnik (2006) defined a method that may help with ethical decision making (Figure 1), perhaps assisting Abi in deciding whether to act if he sees the manufacturer publishing only part of the data.



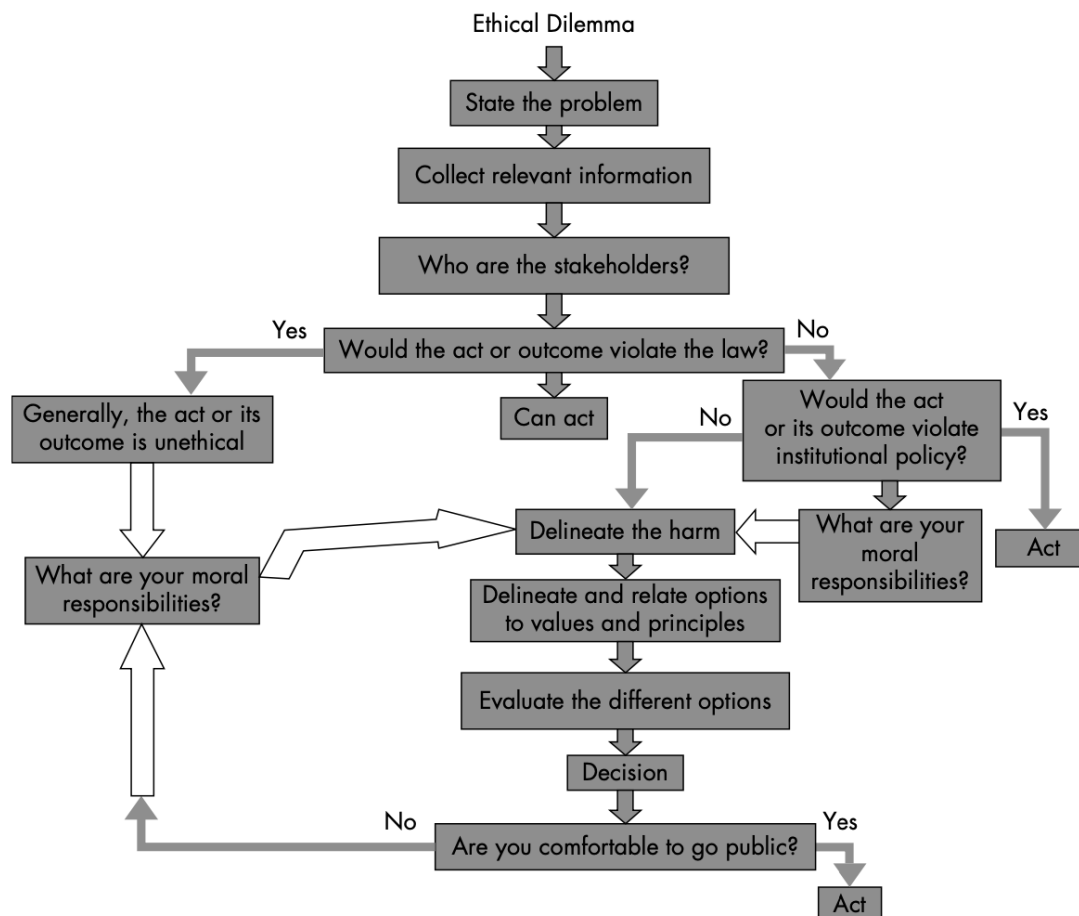


Figure 1

## References

- Resnik, D.B. (2000). Statistics, ethics, and research: An agenda for education and reform. *Accountability in Research* 8(1): 163-188.
- Shamoo, A.E. & Resnik, D.B. (2009) *Responsible conduct of research*. Oxford University Press.
- Shamoo, A.E. and Resnik, D.B. (2006) Ethical Issues for Clinical Research Managers. *Drug information journal: DIJ/Drug Information Association* 40(4): 371-383.

**Reply**

## 3 replies

1



Post by [Andrey Smirnov](#)  
Peer Response

[32 days ago](#)

Hi Hendrik,

Thanks for posting this, it is nice to see a visual representation of the decision making process as it relates to ethical dilemmas. One should be mindful, however, that considering decision making as a



strictly linear process with a clearly defined algorithm can be treacherous. For example, it can trick us into believing that the correct decision can be arrived at in several easy steps, regardless of our cognitive and emotional responses (e.g., motivations, biases), and that this method can be repeatedly and successfully applied to every ethical dilemma. It also does not say anything about the need to reflect on the processes involved and the resulting outcome.

A similar, yet slightly more flexible way of thinking about the ethical decision making process can be found in Handy & Russell (2018). The so-called "road map" approach proposed by the authors attempts to take into account the fact that ethical dilemmas are context specific and incorporate other considerations mentioned above, such as the decision maker's cognition and emotions. It also highlights the importance of reflection and reframes each ethical dilemma as a learning opportunity, both from the personal and organizational perspective.

### References

Handy, F. & Russell, A. (2018) 'A Road Map for Ethical Decision-Making', in: *Ethics for Social Impact*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. 89-118.

[Reply](#)

2



Post by [Doug Leece](#)

Peer Response

[32 days ago](#)

Hi Hendrik,

Prior to reading your post and Andrey's response I had not considered the concept of different ethical frameworks, after reviewing both Handy & Russell (2018) and a succinct post from the University of Ohio (2022) utilitarian and virtue approaches both seem common reference points in business literature. Insisting scientists should stick to the truth relies on personal character traits or virtue approach since they are unlikely to be caught (Fanelli, 2013). Such actions are often easier to say than do when matters of employment are involved because businesses have clients, shareholders, supporting employees and so forth that are also affected by the actions of people making the ethical decisions (Audi, 2012).

I applaud the complexity of the decision tree, it easily illustrates ethical decisions are complicated although I am less convinced it is a robust path to an answer in all instances, and may be more suitable as guideline to yet another framework for ethical evaluation.



Audi, R. (2012). Virtue Ethics as a Resource in Business. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 22(2): 273-291. doi:10.5840/beq201222220

Fanelli, D. (2013) Redefine misconduct as distorted reporting. *Nature*, 494:149. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1038/494149a> [Accessed 1 Aug 2022]

Handy, F. & Russell, A. (2018) 'A Road Map for Ethical Decision-Making', in: *Ethics for Social Impact*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. 89-118.

Ohio University, 2022, 3 Ethical Decision Making Frameworks. Available from: <https://onlinemasters.ohio.edu/blog/3-frameworks-for-ethical-decision-making/>

**Reply.**

Minimum rating: -

3



Post by **Shan Swanlow**  
Peer Response

19 days ago

Hi Hendrik,

Thanks for presenting the framework as guidance on how Abi should approach the situation.

The framework you posted suggests that if an act isn't legal, its likely unethical and its outcome would likely be unethical as well. This makes sense, but also highlights an important point: that there is a relationship between ethics and law. In this case study, bioethics would be the specific form of ethics applied, and Stoeklé et al. (2019) suggest the following relationship between bioethics and law: laws are created to improve the survival of society, and the goal of bioethics is to evaluate how those laws apply in practical situations, by looking at practical risks and benefits. The purpose of bioethics is not to apply laws or standards, but to find solutions to the risks that arise within specific situations, and these assessments (and proposed solutions) may result in laws (or morals) changing.

This argument has an interesting implication: bioethics may evolve faster than the law itself, and professionals may find themselves in a situation where the ethical thing to do is not lawful (yet). This framework focuses on delineating harm above all else, which aligns with recommended bioethical practice of "do no harm" (Schwartz et al., 2020). However, delineating harm in bioethics presents an interesting question: should an individual's health be treated as more important compared to other factors? Consider if Abi finds that there are long-term health effects from consuming the cereal, so he publicises



his findings and the manufacturer closes down, causing people to lose their jobs. Employees were financially harmed but consumer health was protected- would this be more ethical than not reporting a problem?

### References

Schwartz, D., Posthauer, M. & O'Sullivan, M. (2020) Advancing Nutrition and Dietetics Practice: Dealing With Ethical Issues of Nutrition and Hydration. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* 121(5): 823-831. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2020.07.028>

Stoeklé, H., Deleuze, J. & Vogt, G. (2019) Society, law, morality and bioethics: A systemic point of view. *Ethics, Medicine and Public Health* 10: 22-26. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jemep.2019.06.005>

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