

# Research Methods and Professional Practice

## June 2022

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### « Collaborative Learning Discussion 2



**Doug Leece**

#### **Initial Post**

24 days ago

2 replies



Last 22 days ago

Although ensuring public safety is a government responsibility, funding and logistic limits often means private research funding. Examples of tainted research are easier to find in medical research (Hofmann, 2018) (Khan et al., 2008) but intuitively the preference for testing facilities that find in an organization's favour would be a consistent capitalist driver, a trend identified in this 2018 food industry study (Sacks Id et al., 2020), aligning with the case study's ethical quandary (Essex, 2022).

Defining nutrient rich food is more ambiguous than determining which foods have low nutritional value (Drewnowski, 2005); conceivably, the researcher needs to report findings, not state the cereal's nutritional value. Unfortunately, without study design details in the case, questions regarding the reporting obligations can only result in speculative answers. Publicly available ethical requirements for organizations applicable to this research like the US. FDA (FDA, 2019) and National Science Foundation (National Science Foundation, 2021) focus on financial conflicts of interest rather than research integrity.

The retraction rates for poor research practices are low (Campos-Varela & Ruano-Raviña, 2019) making professional blow-back unlikely, the researcher also has no control over how the research will be interpreted and marketed by the company (Mindell et al., 2019), therefore Abi's ethical dilemma is primarily personal integrity. If advising the researcher, I would suggest selecting single approach suitable for peer scrutiny, include the study design or research methodology enabling knowledgeable reviewers determining scientific validity, and clearly identify the funding source for the research.

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## 2 replies

1



Post by [Hendrik Van Rooyen](#)

Peer Response

[22 days ago](#)

Thank you for your excellent contribution. After reading the research from Sacks et al. (2020), I was quite surprised with the findings there suggesting how common it is for the food industry to get involved in peer-reviewed research. This is especially alarming considering how science can sway policy makers (Fooks et al., 2019).

While I agree that the researcher loses control when handing over the results, I do think that Abi may still have the choice to act at a later stage if he chooses to. Obviously depending on what happens with the results. It is for this reason why I like the method described by Shamoo & Resnik (2006) as their approach is not limited to a time factor. Having said that, it does over simplify the process, but can act as an aid if you are not sure which way to go.



## References

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**Reply.**

2



Post by **Taylor Edgell**

Peer Response

[22 days ago](#)

Hi Doug,

You make a solid argument that privately funded research is very much a contributing factor within many industries. It is therefore difficult to ensure that this privately funded research does not skew or drive the research trend in a particular direction. Although any research funding is positive, it is imperative that any outcome is reflective of the truth. The dangers can be more than a single biased research study, but the development of a systematic bias in the community's (or industries) body of knowledge (Holman & Elliot, 2018).

It is also interesting to consider the difficulty in reporting unethical research conduct, especially in relation to private companies. At the end of the day private researchers are employed by a company and have a vested interest in ensuring their source of income is safe. This may account for the reluctance of researcher to report unethical conduct outside their own organisations, as seen in some research (Wenger et al. 1999).

In relation to the success of private vs publicly funded research, although far from conclusive, some studies have shown that the quality of government-funded research is higher than that of privately



funded in general (Choi & Lee, 2021). I think this brings up an interesting topic of discussion outside of just research ethics, but also towards the quality of research dependant on its type of funding.

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