Ethics Case Study

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1&2. List the ethical issues you observed in *Henry’s Daughters*. From your personal perspective, prioritize these ethical issues from most critical to least critical.

Henry bribes the state senator to win grant money for his client, GuideMe.

The state senator that Henry bribed to favor the GuideMe system oversees the ethics investigation.

Jeff is responsible for making the final decision on the system to win the grant, but he is influenced by favors from Henry due to their close friendship.

Laura is asked to testify against her father in the case, and she is granted immunity from prosecution. She uses her father’s journal as evidence against him and the state senator.

Laura was responsible for recommending a system to the Department of Transportation, but she has ties to both through her father, to GuideMe, and her sister, to Outocar.

Laura shares proprietary information about GuideMe to Julie, and Julie attempts to copy some of the features of the GuideMe system. Barry later takes credit for Julie’s work.

Jeff gives Henry the full ratings of the two systems.

Laura tells Julie about the privacy concerns regarding GuideMe.

1. Discuss the movie from these three other perspectives:
   1. **Henry’s Perspective**: Assume you are Henry.
      1. What specific ethical issues do you face?

Henry is connected to all of the major players in this case. He manipulates all of them to further his own interests. Henry asks the state senator to initiate the grant program with the promise to back his campaigns if his client, GuideMe, is awarded state money. Henry is close friends with Jeff, a high-level manager in the DOT. Henry influences Jeff to help with the bribe by giving a recommendation for his son to receive a scholarship and recommending Jeff for a job with GuideMe after he retires from the DOT. Laura, Henry’s older daughter, is in charge of making a recommendation to Jeff regarding who should receive the grant, but we don’t see Henry trying to influence her decision because he knows that Jeff will ignore her recommendation. Julie, Henry’s younger daughter, has a job with Outocar, but we don’t see Henry attempt to influence her.

1. What are some things that you should consider?

Henry should consider how his actions affect the people around him. Ultimately he is heavily punished, but his actions negatively affected other people as well, including his daughters. His bribe could negatively affect the state senator’s image. The state senator oversees the ethics investigation, so we don’t see who makes the decision to punish Henry or how the state senator influenced this decision. Jeff could be fired from his job with the DOT for accepting favors from Henry in exchange for giving preferential treatment to GuideMe. Laura dedicates a year to working on the grant contest, and her work is ultimately wasted because the contest was fixed. Julie may have gotten a great opportunity to work for Outocar’s development of their system if it were selected, but she doesn’t get the chance because Outocar is not selected.

1. From whom or where should you seek guidance?

Henry should consult his years of experience and training as an engineer to help him recognize the conflicts of interest in the situation. Recognizing the conflicts of interest, he should hire an engineering ethics consultant to help him avoid unethical and illegal actions.

1. **Laura’s Perspective**: Assume you are Laura.
   1. What specific ethical issues do you face?

Laura is influenced by her father’s connection to GuideMe and her sister’s connection to Outocar. We do not see Laura’s connection to her father influence her decision, but we do see her share proprietary and privileged information with Julie multiple times. During the ethics investigation, she submits her father’s journal as evidence against him after she receives immunity from prosecution.

1. What decisions would you change if you were Laura?

Laura should not talk to Julie about the GuideMe system during the contest, and she should not tell Julie about the privacy concerns regarding GuideMe.

1. From whom or where could you seek guidance?

Laura expresses concerns to Jeff, her immediate superior, regarding the fairness of the contest and regarding the privacy concerns with GuideMe. He tells her not to “rock the boat”. This is problematic for her, because going over Jeff’s head could cause her to be fired. Julie doesn’t know immediately that her father has bribed Jeff and Bob, but she should be more persistent with her concerns with Jeff, and she could consider speaking with either Jeff’s superiors or a state ethics board.

1. **Julie’s Perspective:** Assume you are Julie.
   1. What specific ethical issues do you face?

Julie is given proprietary information about GuideMe, and she tries to independently copy the idea. At first, Julie lies to Laura about whether Outocar is developing similar features. She could attempt to influence Laura to recommend Outocar, but we do not see her do so. We see Julie working in a hostile environment multiple times, as both her boss and the DOT supervisors harass her. Since both have power over her, it’s not easy for her to report the harassment.

1. What decisions would you change if you were Julie?

Julie should not have looked at the proprietary information that Laura showed her, nor should she have attempted to copy it.

1. From whom or where could you seek guidance?

Julie can consult with either Laura or Henry, both of whom are more experienced than her (although whether they will give her good advice is dubious), to ask whether she should do anything with the information she was given.

1. **Responsibility Perspective:** If you were in charge and had the authority and the funding to make any changes you wanted to make in your organization policies:
   1. What specific steps would you take to improve the organization culture?

There should be outlets and methods of oversight for employees to report harassment or ethics violations without fear of retribution against them. These outlets should have the option of anonymity for this reason.

1. Who would you involve in this process?

There could be an independent group of people who review cases of harassment or ethics violations. This group should consist of a stratified sample of employees from all levels of the organization.

1. How and when would you communicate the organization policies to:
2. Your employees?

Employees should be informed of organization policies upon hire and whenever policies change.

1. Your clients?

Clients should be informed of organization policies before contracts are signed and whenever policies change.

1. The public?

The public should be able to have access to organization policies upon demand. This information could be posted on the organization’s website.

1. Which aspects of the NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers are relevant to your decision making on this case?

Henry and Jeff did not hold paramount the safety and welfare of the public. They lobbied for the GuideMe system to be given the grant, despite the fact that the Outocar system had a better safety rating. Jeff was not faithful to the DOT. He acted in Henry’s interests because Henry promised favors for him. Jeff, Henry, and Bob were all guilty of deceptive acts. The contest was contrived as a farce to funnel public funds to GuideMe. Julie’s copying of the GuideMe features was not honorable or ethical. Laura’s submission of her father’s journal, though it helped in his prosecution, is arguably not honorable or ethical.

Henry's Daughters

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The most severe ethical issues I had observed while viewing Henry’s Daughters are as follows:

The dissemination of private and proprietary information between Henry’s two daughters, Laura and Julie.

The lack of respect for public privacy in allowing the state police to obtain biometric data collected during the project that could potentially be used to track and ‘spy’ on the public.

The intellectual theft that had occurred when Julie’s boss had used the simulation program she had created (and also stole from GUIDEME) for his PhD dissertation.

Using influence to solicit government aid in procuring contracts when Henry had taken Senator Bob out fishing and pitched the entire project to him.

In order from most to least severe or critical, I would list the ethical issues I had noticed as follows:

-Potentially harming the public through violating their right to privacy

-Receiving contracts unethically through influencing the Senator.

-Intellectual theft

-Leaking sensitive proprietary information

Henry’s Perspective

                It’s my opinion that Henry should burden the majority of the responsibility since he had started the entire chain of events. The biggest specific ethical issue Henry faces coincides directly with Section II, article 4, item (a) of the NSPE Code of Ethics for engineers.  This item addresses conflicts of interest. As a part time lobbyist, I believe that Henry should do a better job keeping his political affiliations separate from his engineering endeavors.  Henry should consider retiring permanently as a professional engineer if he wants to continue with his political ventures. If he needed guidance, I would assume that Henry should consult with some peers to gain perspective of whether or not he is behaving ethically.

Laura’s Perspective

                Laura was put in a really bad spot by her father. Laura’s biggest ethical issue was her failure to report to the proper authorities that she understood the ‘contest’ and the awarding of the contracts was rigged. The Senator hints at that during the ethics hearing, but it was her responsibility as the project manager and a professional engineer. Laura should have shown some courage and reported the violation as soon as it was made clear to her. I would guess that normally, she would want to seek guidance from her father… but his moral compass isn’t exactly on point. Her boss, Jack doesn’t seem so ethical either. She could probably contact the NSPE and report her concerns, they could more than likely aid her in contacting the appropriate authority.

Julie’s Perspective

                Outside of the burdens of responsibility and political involvement lie Julie, the most junior in terms of experience. Julie’s ethical issue is completely self-inflicted. During seemingly innocent chatter between her and her sister, Julie gains knowledge of a computer simulation used in the rival’s design. She then uses this information to create a similar system for her own team. I would have changed Julie’s decision to incorporate technology that is similar to the rival and found a different solution to the specific technical problem at hand. I would have also informed my boss that the knowledge I obtained, was obtained unethically and should not be published in his dissertation.  Guidance should have been sought from more experienced engineers in the firm that were not involved in the current project at hand.

Responsible Party’s Perspective

Organizational culture could have been improved through periodic training of the employees on topics such as ethics and proper ethical behavior. The process would involve all employees making awareness an ‘all hands’ activity and I would also initiate an anonymous reporting system where employees could safely report unethical behavior.  New policies would be communicated to employees during mandatory training and initial hiring. Affidavits would be signed acknowledging the understanding of such policies. Clients would be informed in the contract about the ethics policies held by the organization. The public would be informed through press releases and advertisements.

I found the following NSPE codes applicable to the case:

I. Fundamental Canons

•  Avoid deceptive acts.

•  Conduct themselves honorably, responsibly, ethically, and lawfully so as to enhance the honor, reputation, and usefulness of the profession.

II. Rules of Practice

4. Engineers shall act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.

1. Engineers shall disclose all known or potential conflicts of interest that could influence or appear to influence their judgment or the quality of their services.
2. Engineers shall not accept compensation, financial or otherwise, from more than one party for services on the same project, or for services pertaining to the same project, unless the circumstances are fully disclosed and agreed to by all interested parties.
3. Engineers shall not solicit or accept financial or other valuable consideration, directly or indirectly, from outside agents in connection with the work for which they are responsible.

III. Professional Obligations

4. Engineers shall not disclose, without consent, confidential information concerning the business affairs or technical processes of any present or former client or employer, or public body on which they serve.

1. Engineers shall not, without the consent of all interested parties, promote or arrange for new employment or practice in connection with a specific project for which the engineer has gained particular and specialized knowledge.
2. Engineers shall not, without the consent of all interested parties, participate in or represent an adversary interest in connection with a specific project or proceeding in which the engineer has gained particular specialized knowledge on behalf of a former client or employer.

5. Engineers shall not be influenced in their professional duties by conflicting interests.

1. Engineers shall not accept financial or other considerations, including free engineering designs, from material or equipment suppliers for specifying their product.
2. Engineers shall not accept commissions or allowances, directly or indirectly, from contractors or other parties dealing with clients or employers of the engineer in connection with work for which the engineer is responsible.

9.  Engineers shall give credit for engineering work to those to whom credit is due, and will recognize the proprietary interests of others.

Response to Post

Based upon this perspective, I would be most confident in defending Laura's actions. We know that Henry is guilty of bribing two different state officials, so his actions are quite difficult to defend. Between Laura and Julie, the original post discusses the ethics involved regarding Laura and Julie's relationship and shared living space. The two main questions to consider are whether Laura should have excused herself from the project due to her close relationship with Julie and whether Laura was at fault for Julie's use of GuideMe's proprietary information.

Laura knew that she would be in a position to make a decision that would affect Julie, which could call her impartiality into question. In that situation, Laura could have excused herself from the project and taken an assignment that didn't involve a family member. Laura also chose to divulge proprietary information about GuideMe to Julie in a casual setting. Although Laura is not innocent, consider these actions in contrast to Julie's actions.

Julie lied to Laura about whether Outocar was developing a system similar to GuideMe's, and she proceeded to copy the GuideMe system based on the information that Laura gave her. Julie's actions amounted to plagiarism, regardless of the fact that the information was privileged.

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WEEK 7 Counter strike

RE: AN EXAMPLE OF FALLACIES USED IN PUBLIC PERSUASION

[Collapse](https://myasucourses.asu.edu/webapps/discussionboard/do/message?action=list_messages&forum_id=_946197_1&group_id=_268979_1&nav=group_forum&conf_id=_529374_1&course_id=_296601_1&message_id=_15953739_1)

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I agree that equating euthanasia with homicide is a fallacy of oversimplification. The acts of murder and manslaughter are each distinct from euthanasia. For this reason, many jurisdictions have recently adopted laws that allow euthanasia, while many others persist in their prohibition of the act.

However, the analogy between euthanasia and execution is a poor one. Using the AMA definition of euthanasia, it is the "the administration of a lethal agent by another person to a patient for the purpose of relieving the patient’s intolerable and incurable suffering." Execution does not meet this definition because it is not used for the purpose of relieving suffering. The methods of execution are indeed meant to be relatively painless, but this is to avoid what may be seen as cruel punishment. Furthermore, the act of euthanasia is usually done according to the desires of the individual, while execution is usually done against the individual's will. This is not to comment on whether execution is a moral practice, but to compare the two practice is conflating two very different things.

You go on to give an example about a patient with ALS who desires to be extubated and allowed to die. This is also a poor analogy because it refers to a different ethical dilemma. Referring back to the AMA defintion, this situation does not qualify as euthanasia because no lethal agent is administered. In fact, refusing medical treatment to be allowed to die is a common practice in most jurisdictions. Patients or their guardians may give "do not resussitate" orders if they wish to die. However, the proper legal permission and due process must be followed. If a relative were to remove the feeding tube without permission from the patient, a medical doctor, or the proper legal authority, the act would be considered homicide.

A famous example of this type of case was that of Terri Schiavo. She was in a persistent vegitative state and effectively brain dead for over 8 years before her husband asked for her feeding tube to be removed. His request was granted by a local judge, and the validity of this decision was upheld by the US Supreme Court. Despite the protests of Terri's family, Michael Schiavo had custody over Terri and he had the legal right to make the decision with her doctors to remove her feeding tube to allow her to die. Jeb Bush, Florida's governor at the time, attempted to overrule the judge, but this action was reversed by a second decision of the US Supreme Court.

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