

## Unit 7 Collaborative Discussion 2

# Peer Responses

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### 1. Response to Taylor Edgell

Hi Taylor,

I enjoyed reading your post because it was thoughtful toward the data aspect of research.

Your statement succinctly sums up ethical research: "allow the data to speak for itself." It showed how Abi reached an impasse: the obligation under EU regulations to publish, "both positive and negative", and that data should correspond to outcomes concluded from research. I think it must be quite a difficult challenge for researchers to retract their findings if they believe the research results are unethical.

Fortunately, no person is an island--Abi is not alone in their dilemma--as Gureev et al. (2019) point out concerning unethical authorship issues in scientific publications. In their

research, they looked at unfair authorship in scientific publications, the most common violation of publication ethics: unfairly including (as authors) people who do not meet the criteria for authorship and concealing the real performers of scientific work. They attribute this unethical behaviour to three concerns: the imperfection of the science management system, which requires high rates of research publication activity; implementation of partly discriminatory policies of journals against young authors that forces them to include authoritative scientists as co-authors; and conflicts of interest in medical publications, which prompt pharmaceutical companies to exclude real the performers of the work.

## References

Gureev, V.N., Lakizo, I.G. and Mazov, N.A., (2019). Unethical authorship in scientific publications (a review of the problem). Scientific and Technical Information Processing, 46(4):219-232.

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## 2. Response to Suresh Sigera

Hi Suresh,

I agree with your statement, "the answer to the research question should not deviate from the research information in any way." and was considering that the statement is itself a research question. "What is the deviation of research content from stated objectives?".

Considering the topic of ethics in research and specifically the case study, I found interesting an (old) article that leveraged Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action for predicting unethical behaviour (Randall, 1989). Randall points out that the work by Fishbein and Ajzen states that researchers should focus on behavioural intentions and the beliefs that shape those intentions instead of personality traits and demographic characteristics. Chang (1998) then tested this theory against the Theory of Planned Behaviour. He concluded that can be used successfully to predict intentions to perform unethical behaviours and is better than the theory of reasoned action, which does not account for the resources and opportunities in predicting unethical behaviour.

It may be that not reporting research contrary to what is expected can possibly be predicted based on the above theory.

## References

Chang, M.K. (1998). Predicting unethical behavior: a comparison of the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of business ethics*, 17(16):1825-1834.

Randall, D.M., 1989. Taking stock: Can the theory of reasoned action explain unethical conduct? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 8(11): 873-882.

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### 3. Response from Andrey Smirnov

Hi Michael,

You have raised a very fundamental question that goes far beyond the scope of this unit, and that is of the underlying causes of immoral or unethical behavior especially in relation to the social and economic order in which it takes place. The lack of moral and social commitments is an often encountered critique of unrestrained capitalism (Ikerd, 2008), and there are many insightful papers on the problems of ethics and alienation in capitalist society (Corlett, 1988, Collins, 1992). This subject is far too complex to tackle in one comment; that said, because this is going to be our last collaborative discussion, I would like to take an opportunity and share a reference to a rather fascinating article by Constable (2018). This paper takes an approach unlike any other work on the subject of late capitalism and I hope that it will challenge your thinking in new and unexpected ways.

Coming back to the topic of ethical concerns in research, I agree with your assessment that a researcher cannot be held liable for the use of their work, provided that it was conducted in a factual, unbiased and transparent manner, and that any potential conflict of interest had been identified and disclosed. In certain situations, however, there will be no other option than to retract the research findings; Edgell (2022) provides a few good references on how to handle unethical research and when it should be retracted.

## References

Collins, D. (1992) The Fall of Business Ethics in Capitalist Society: Adam Smith Revisited. *Business Ethics Quarterly* 4(4): 519-535.

Constable, C. (2018) Challenging capitalism: Ethics, exploitation and the sublime in *Moon and Source Code*. *Science Fiction Film and Television* 11(3): 417-448.

Corlett, J. (1988) Alienation in Capitalist Society. *Journal of Business Ethics* 7(9): 699-701.

Edgell, T. (2022) Initial Post. Available from: <https://www.my-course.co.uk/mod/hsuforum/discuss.php?d=318492> [Accessed 30 July 2022].

Ikerd, J. (2008) Sustainable Capitalism: A Matter of Ethics and Morality. *Problems of Sustainable Development* 3(1): 13-22.

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#### 4. Reply to Andrey Smirnov

Hi Andrey,

Thank you for your insightful response. Yes, we could drink from the goblet of Social Contemplations until it is emptied, and after, we sober up on the dry, slightly bitter, unleavened crackers of reality. It's complicated because (I think) each shining shard of the human society carries within them a self, a selfish self which leads to the "unrestrained capitalism" mentioned. It's a fascinating topic to think about; however, this topic is not Pizza and Coke material, so best for it to slumber--thank you for the reference to Constable (2018); reading the content certainly brought different considerations.

I like a few statements found in the post by Edgell (2022) that state, "avoid questionable research practises such as...exploiting analytical flexibility" and that researchers have a duty of ethics to warn against publishing results that are not legitimate. It makes one contemplate the fine balance researchers must hold in their ethical mindset, that ethics is a mindset, a belief (if I may), or even a set of (learned) behaviours that drive one's actions for which we bear some responsibility for.

## 5. Response from Hendrik van Rooyen

Hey Michael,

Thanks for another good contribution. I agree with the researcher not being obligated to give both views and that Abi is not responsible for how the research is being used. However, I would like to expand on what you wrote in your last paragraph. Yes, perhaps going ahead and publishing the results for the full view may be a way for the sake of acting ethical. Understandably, as you mention, it may not be so straightforward in regards to the ethic committees that may prioritise institution reputation over academic freedom (Hedgecoe, 2016; Jacob & Foth, 2019).

As a researcher, or just a person in general, looking the other way shouldn't be common practice. Brownell & Warner (2009) discusses how similarities can be drawn between turning a blind eye with the tobacco industry in the past versus what is happening in the food industry in which the main objective has been to counter possibly damaging evidence. Furthermore, the authors discuss the consequences ignoring has on public health.

Obviously acting can be influenced by many factors and I acknowledge the many levels of grey areas, but if you can act without getting into trouble, then why not?

### References

Rucker, R.B. & Rucker, M.R. (2016) Nutrition: ethical issues and challenges. *Nutrition Research* 36(11): 1183-1192. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nutres.2016.10.006>

Hedgecoe, A. (2016) Reputational risk, academic freedom and research ethics review. *Sociology* 50(3): 486-501. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038515590756>

Brownell, K.D. & Warner, K.E. (2009) The perils of ignoring history: Big Tobacco played dirty and millions died. How similar is Big Food?. *The Milbank Quarterly* 87(1): 259-294. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0009.2009.00555.x>

Jacob, J.D. & Foth, T. (2019) Conflicting interests: critiquing the place of "institutional reputation" in research ethics reviews. *Aporia* 11(2): 27-34. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18192/aporia.v11i2.4596>

## 6. Reply to Hendrik van Rooyen

Hi Hendrik,

Thank you for your thoughtful response. Absolutely. I agree with the expression, "if you can act without getting into trouble, then why not?" because this type of (unethical) behaviour is observed daily; it is not theory but practical.

The link to the article by Brownell and Warner (2009) you provided was an informative read, albeit shocking that the ethical code of honest research so quickly falls asleep in the backseat while profits are protected. For instance, the article stated a meta-analysis (not funded by the drinks industry) showed a clear relationship between the consumption of soft drinks, poor nutrition, and adverse health outcomes. The soft drink industry then employed two researchers to undertake similar research, one employed by the ABA, and (un)surprisingly, their results found no related adverse outcomes when consuming soft drinks. Statistics are numbers, numbers are Marionettes.

Do you think AI will help resolve the ethical issue organic researchers experience, given that it is a black box of "pass!" or "you shall not pass!"?