

BAE 815- S08
Research Ethics Assignment

Assuming I was in Dr. Goodwin's research team as described and told in the website (http://www.chass.ncsu.edu/langure/ethics/PHI816%20Fall%202007/modules/my%20interests/mary%20allen/mary_allen_new_open.php)...

I think I will be like Mary on one aspect, especially on the first reaction, but will be more like Garrett in terms of action.

Let me lay first the facts. Dr. Goodwin falsified a document by declaring a picture to be a recent discovery, when in fact it is not. Upon gathering more information, it became apparent that Dr. Goodwin has been consistently doing similar falsification in other papers and materials. I consider this as the main issue. To report her or not, and to change laboratory and adviser or not, becomes the incidental upshot of the main issue. The other complicating issues here are the repercussions on the fate of the research team should Dr. Goodwin be removed from the university.

I am now going into my reaction regarding the main issue. First of all is to throw a lot of doubt regarding the falsification matter. Having known her personally and professionally, I would not want to easily sever my respect to her. I will give Dr. Goodwin the benefit of the doubt that she might have just committed a mistake or a series of mistakes. Nobody is perfect. Even though we give a lot of effort in editing, proofreading and reviewing the papers, errors are bound to happen at times. In the advent of "cut and paste" and templates, the tendency to commit such mistakes are even higher, more so that the error was regarding a picture, not a text. But in light of that, I will also be cautious and would probably dig deeper into that issue to verify or dispute the issue. Anyway, there is still chance to correct the error.

The more information I could gather, the better. Given the information gathered, which in this case turned out to be deliberate, I will still give Dr. Goodwin a chance to explain. Secondary data may clear but it might just be the other side of the coin. I will try to talk with her and probably let her explain the issue, and then explain the reason behind the gathered data. I shall do it in a non-accusative manner. However, I would open up to her the probable action that we plan to pursue.

I am not totally convinced that there is no authority or entity wherein I could report this issue. The fact that a university has an organizational structure, it also means that there is a command of authority. Given the tendency of the immediate head to protect Dr. Goodwin upon submitting a report, it is a good practice to involve also some responsible entity. What I would do if I am in that situation is to write a letter to the highest authority of the university and copy furnish it either to the department head and another appropriate office. This way there is those check and counter-check of actions.

Surely, this is a very tiring emotional and psychological test on the research team. But a moral obligation has to be done in order to correct the mistakes, if still possible, prevent further damage, and help the involved in making amends.