

Data Management Case Study Reaction Paper

Jessica Banks, a PhD student, collected data on urban sprawl while researching with Dr. Brian Hayward. She now wishes to copy the data for use in her faculty career. However, Dr. Hayward says the data belongs to the university and that she cannot copy it. The ownership of this research data is the major ethical issue; unfortunately for Jessica, Dr. Hayward is most likely correct.

When Jessica started her research she was working on three different projects. At least one of these projects—which became her dissertation—was related to and later included within one of Dr. Hayward's grants. If, as expected, this grant was awarded not to Dr. Hayward but to the university where he works, any and all data collected for Jessica's dissertation legally belongs to the university, not to Jessica or Dr. Hayward. The grant may have given some limited data rights to Dr. Hayward or Jessica; however, without further details it is safest to assume there are no such rights. Jessica should not copy the data, especially not secretly as Paul Larson unethically suggested.

Neither is Dr. Hayward acting completely ethically. It does not appear that he was responsibly backing up the data, which is stored "only" on his computer. Off-site backups of the data should have been made to ensure its protection and continued use by the university and its students. Also, he and Jessica should have discussed the details of data ownership, including the rights of each researcher, before she began her research with him. Finally, Dr. Hayward should probably have offered Jessica some level of co-authorship or at least acknowledgement on any future work completed with the data she collected, if only as a gesture of goodwill. These measures would have helped solve the ethical issues present in this case study.