



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# Data Selection, Legitimate or Illegitimate? (adapted from NSPE Case No. 85-5)

## Year

1999

## Description

A graduate student intentionally omits some of his research data.

## Body

## Image



## Photograph by Lee Jennings

Elton, an engineer, is conducting graduate research at a major university. In order to complete his graduate studies and produce an advanced degree, Elton must develop a research report. As a part of the effort to develop his report, Elton compiles a vast amount of data relevant to his subject.

The vast majority of data obtained by Elton strongly support not only his report's conclusion, but also the conclusions of others. However, a small proportion of the data differs from the data consistent with Elton's conclusion. Convinced that his report is sound however, and concerned that the inclusion of the anomalous data would only detract from the essentials of the report, Elton does not include these figures in the report.

Was Elton guilty of falsification of research results in omitting the anomalous data? What type of additional information would be ethically relevant to this case?

[NSPE Code of Ethics](#) An earlier version may have been used in this case.

### Notes

See the original NSPE case at: [Engineer's Duty To Report Data Relating to Research - Case No. 85-5](#).

### Rights

Use of Materials on the OEC

### Resource Type

Case Study / Scenario

### Parent Collection

Professional Ethics in Engineering Practice: Discussion Cases Based on NSPE BER Cases

### Topics

Data Management

### Discipline(s)

Engineering

Research Ethics

**Publisher**

Online Ethics Center  
Authoring Institution  
Online Ethics Center