

# Writing and Publishing Secondary Data Cases



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## INTRODUCTION

**Dr. Memar Zadeh:** Thank you very much for coming to our discussion on writing and publishing case studies with secondary data. My name is Maryam Memar Zadeh, and I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Business and Administration at the University of Winnipeg. Let me briefly introduce our guests on this panel. Dr. Gina Grandy is the Dean at Hill-Levene Schools of Business at the University of Regina, and has been the Editor of the *Case Research Journal*(CRJ) since 2017. Dr. Glenn Rowe is a Professor of General Management and Strategy at the Ivey Business School at Western University, and is the Executive Director of Ivey Publishing. My next guest is Dr. Mahendra Gujarathi. He is the Rae D. Anderson Professor of Accountancy at Bentley University. He has been in academia for over four decades, and has written and published several cases using secondary data. Finally, my last guest is Dr. Randall Harris. He is the Chair of the Department of Management and Marketing at Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi, and was President of the North American Case Research Association 2015-2016. He has written several cases using secondary data, some of which we will discuss here today.

Let me give everyone some background on the genesis for this panel discussion. I wrote a case study on Facebook<sup>1</sup> regarding a privacy breach that happened through a company called Cambridge Analytica. The data for the case was primarily secondary data. Dialogue in the case was drawn from the testimony of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg before the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. At the beginning, as I started to collect data for the case, I thought that the case was going to be very easy to do – mostly because I did not need permission from the organization. However, I went through three rounds of revisions on the case. It turned out that it was pretty challenging to research and to write. As a result, I have asked various experts here today to discuss secondary data and its usage in case research and publishing, from both a case writer and case reviewer perspective. Working with secondary data is time consuming and difficult. My own experience with it is that it is also fascinating. I hoped that we could have a discussion on this topic so that other

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case writers could benefit from our collective work using this type of data. Secondary data comes with a unique set of challenges and opportunities. That is the focus for our discussion.

## **DEFINING SECONDARY DATA**

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**Dr. Memar Zadeh:** The first thing that I would like to discuss with the panel is this: there is confusion regarding the term “secondary data”. When it comes to writing cases, especially from the point of view of the *Case Research Journal*, some might say that it is difficult to publish cases that are grounded in secondary data. What is a secondary data case? So, let us start this conversation by having two separate views, one from the perspective of Ivey Publishing, and the second from the point of view of the *Case Research Journal*. Dr. Rowe, would you kindly start the discussion by explaining Ivey Publishing’s view on the meaning of secondary data?

**Dr. Rowe:** At Ivey Publishing, we view secondary data as any data outside the company that you can find in a manner that is legal, ethical, and moral. In general, it is anything other than personal interviews made inside the company. With field research cases, you need to have the company sign a release that clears the case for publication. Therefore, secondary data is any source other than a personal interview. You may talk to someone in the company and find out that you can find something interesting on the website or their annual report or in a marketing release. It does not matter, as long as it is something outside of a personal interview with someone inside the company. Ivey Publishing has a formal definition, and I have my own informal definition. Both definitions are consistent given that I currently work part time overseeing Ivey Publishing.

### **Secondary Data at Ivey Publishing**

- **Secondary data, which Ivey Publishing refers to as ‘published sources’, is any data not collected by the case writer directly.**
- **Secondary data is usually publicly available, but is at a minimum available outside the subject organization in some way.**
- **An informal definition of secondary data would be all data collected from any source other than authorized personal interviews with someone inside a subject organization.**

Source: Dr. Glenn Rowe, Ivey Publishing

**Dr. Grandy:** I would like to point out that Maryam’s (Dr. Memar Zadeh) secondary data case has just recently been accepted for publication in the *CRJ*. Many prospective authors think that *CRJ* does not publish secondary sourced cases - we do. The parameters are narrower than Ivey Publishing, but we have the ability and flexibility to publish secondary sourced cases. For *CRJ* the starting point and the most clear-cut aspect is the source of the data. Cases that are sourced based upon legal proceedings are generally acceptable to the *CRJ*. I will let Randall (Dr. Harris) speak more to that as it relates to his *CRJ* cases, but for Maryam’s (Dr. Memar Zadeh) case it was drawn from testimony in U.S congressional transcripts.

**Dr. Memar Zadeh:** Yes, the core of the case was based upon Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg’s testimony in front of the U.S. Senate and House of

Representatives. The case was supplemented with all other sorts of things as well, including accounts from journalists, company financial reports, and so forth.

**Dr. Grandy:** As a starting point, then, legal proceedings and congressional testimony are the clearest secondary data sources that are acceptable for myself as the *CRJ* editor. The view of *CRJ* is that these data sources are somewhat like primary data. On the one hand, it is published data and therefore secondary. On the other hand, it is a secondary sourced document of a firsthand account, and that is one of the parameters that we use to determine acceptability for the *CRJ*. After that, determining the suitability of cases that are based solely on media reports and/or company press releases is less clear-cut for *CRJ*.

In general, *CRJ* accepts cases based upon primary data, but there are exceptions. I recently accepted a case in *CRJ* that was presented last year at NACRA. It was based only on secondary sources, and it did not include legal proceedings or senate reports. The author was hesitant to submit it, but I said it was an exceptional case and that I would like to try it with our reviewers. The list of sources was quite extensive. I sent it out to reviewers, the reviewers liked the case, but they asked the author to include slightly more diverse and extensive sources of secondary data. For example, they asked the author to consider including industry report data to round it out so that it was not only based on media reports. These were some of our toughest *CRJ* reviewers. They reviewed the revised piece and expressed that this was a perfect example of how a responsive author can meet *CRJ* expectations and publish a purely secondary sourced case in *CRJ*. We have accepted that case, and it will be published. To summarize, the clear-cut parameters for a solely secondary sourced case is a case base based upon legal proceedings complemented with other types of sources, but there are exceptions. In general, it is best to have an extensive list of secondary sources for your case to be considered a fit for *Case Research Journal*.

#### Case Research Journal Editorial Policy on Secondary Data

- **The Case Research Journal specializes in decision-focused cases based on original primary research – normally interviews with key decision makers in the organization, but substantial quotes from legal proceedings and/or congressional testimony are also acceptable.**
- **Cases based entirely on secondary sources will be considered only in unusual circumstances.**
- **Secondary Research (e.g. journalist accounts, high quality website content, etc.) can be used to supplement primary data as needed and appropriate.**

Source: North American Case Research Association, 2019, Retrieved at <https://www.nacra.net/case-research-journal/editorial-policies-and-submission-guidelines/>

**Dr. Rowe:** I just want to add on to what Gina (Dr. Grandy) said. To publish at Ivey Publishing, you have to cite and reference everything in endnotes. It is tougher to get a secondary sourced case published, but about 25 percent to 30 percent of our cases over the last 3 or 4 years have been secondary sourced cases. However, the standard is higher in terms of referencing. Typically, in a 10-page case, 10 pages of

content, 3 or 4 pages of exhibits, you could have as many as two pages of references. It is tougher to publish secondary sourced cases in that sense.

**Dr. Grandy:** The most recent issue of *CRJ* will have two secondary sourced cases that are being published. I would say that is rare, and again I emphasize that while we publish secondary sourced cases, our parameters are narrower than other publishing outlets. I will let some of our other people on the panel speak to the sources of data that they know are sources that *CRJ* reviewers are going to accept as fitting within the mandate of the journal.

**Dr. Gujarathi:** In 2017, I published in *CRJ* a case on Wells Fargo<sup>2</sup> that addressed the issue of how the Bank got obsessed with “cross-selling” and how that resulted in the opening of over two million checking and credit card accounts. At that time, I was not aware as well as I am now that *CRJ* did not accept secondary data cases. The case contained numerous references from the business press, CNBC videos, congressional testimonies, Senate hearings, and other sources. That made it a compelling and contemporary case in the minds of the reviewers of *CRJ* and its then-editor John Lawrence. I did not even get a question about my use of secondary data.

Let me expand on two points regarding what Glenn (Dr. Rowe) said. One, as many as 20-25 percent of the total cases that Ivey publishes are based on secondary data. Do we want to deprive *CRJ* readership of such cases? I also note that many of these cases are among the best-selling cases at Ivey. Two, *CRJ*'s requirement for cases to have a decision focus is understandable. I do not think anyone in the room is going to argue about that. However, there are numerous business decisions that are made using secondary data. A stock recommendation by a buy-side equity analyst, or by a short-selling firm, for example. In addition, the use of secondary data does not dilute the rigor of such cases. Indeed, many published cases using secondary data are very rigorous.

I would like to add that the line between primary data and secondary data is somewhat thin and getting thinner. Let me use the example of my case on Diamond Foods<sup>3</sup>. The Company was spectacularly successful. The stock price had risen from \$14 to \$96 in less than six years. Then, in 2011, the company had ‘spooky’ accounting that several reporters wrote about in the popular business press. Prompted by these reports, a short-selling firm issued a sell recommendation on the stock, saying that the price would likely come down to \$43 (in fact, it came down to \$14 within a year of the report). The point is this: the report by the short-seller would have been primary field data in the good old days when such data was not available in a published form. Roll the clock forward, enter the digital age, and the same report, its full version, was now available on the web. Just because the report is now widely available on the internet, should *CRJ* consider the case unacceptable? I just raise that as an issue.

**Dr. Harris:** I think, from my point of view, what it really comes down to every time I write a case is the quality of the data. That is really the question for me. Therefore, I have a more expansive view about primary versus secondary data than I think you may find in traditional definitions. Let me give you a definition that I use. Primary data is direct testimony without intervention or filter or is some type of direct artifact of the organization. The latest innovation of course is emails, and e-mail archives can provide unique insights. It turns out that email and internet access is not quite as private as we thought. Email, in particular, is leaky, so email records are fertile ground for all kinds of different things. Primary data, then, are sources that get direct access to the thinking of the actors involved. I look for those sources. Now

does that encompass archival sources? It does. It also encompasses field research in the traditional sense.

The point is, in agreement with our previous speaker, that I do not see a line between what we would traditionally call primary data and secondary data. I think there is another delineation, which is archival versus field research. Archival sources are becoming increasingly effective at transmitting what I call primary data to case researchers. That having been said, secondary data then is some type of information or artifact of the organization that has been subjected to some type of treatment. What do I mean by that? That would be interviews that were conducted by, say, a Wall Street Journal reporter and reported in the Wall Street Journal, so there is a treatment there, there is a filter there, and that really sets up what I would call a secondary source. That is not as effective as a source, particularly from the point of *CRJ* and for myself as a case writer. That is how I would break out primary versus secondary. A much more expansive view, I think.

<b>Primary versus Secondary Data in Case Research A Proposed Typology</b>		
	<b>Field Research</b>	<b>Archival Research</b>
<b>Primary Data</b>	<b>Interviews with Key Decision Makers in the Subject Organization</b>	<b>Congressional Testimony Litigation Documents Internal Company Documents Archived Email Threads</b>
<b>Secondary Data</b>	<b>Published Case Studies Qualitative Academic Studies</b>	<b>Wall Street Journal Articles Company Press Releases SEC Filings and Statements</b>

Source: Dr. Randall Harris

**Dr. Memar Zadeh:** Excellent.

**Dr. Rowe:** Can I just add a point to this discussion? I had a direct quote from a CFO of a major company headquartered in St. John's Newfoundland that made an acquisition in the US, a \$12 billion acquisition. I had a direct quote from the CFO that I put in my case, and I sent it to him because he was going to sign off on the case. Guess what happened to that quote. It was not deleted, but it was changed substantially. The original quote was much better, but I had to go with what he (the CFO) wanted to say he said. Randall (Dr. Harris) said something about getting a quote from the Wall Street Journal or in Canada from the Globe and Mail. You really then do get an unadulterated quote from that CFO, from that CEO, from the person that was interviewed. My question is how is that different from getting that quote, a quote that could be changed by your personal interview? Why is that quote in the Globe and Mail considered secondary data and inferior to a direct quote from a CEO when he can massage the writing of the case because the company signs off and approves publication of the case?

**Dr. Grandy:** So many provocative questions being raised at this panel today.

**Dr. Memar Zadeh:** To summarize, the panel concludes that the line between primary and secondary data is increasingly blurred.

## CHALLENGES WITH UTILIZING SECONDARY DATA IN CASE RESEARCH

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**Dr. Memar Zadeh:** My next question is for the editors. A quick search in the last four years for the *CRJ* and Ivey Publishing shows that the rate of published secondary data cases remains very low. Why do we have a low proportion of published cases grounded in secondary data? Would the editors kindly comment on that?

**Dr. Grandy:** We have relatively few cases published in *CRJ* that are solely secondary sourced because our interpretation of suitable secondary sources is narrow and the expectations regarding the extensiveness of sources used are high. Further, I think it is often hard to come up with a decision focus for a case based upon secondary data. You cannot create a decision for a protagonist that was not the decision they faced. However, there are ways around that sometimes. For example, there may be a crisis faced by an organization and they have to respond – so the decision focus is obvious from the secondary sources. Sometimes there is something covered in the media where there is a decision accounted for that actually does not require the author to embellish the data or to guess at what the CEO might have been facing. A significant challenge with secondary sourced cases is creating a decision focus that reflects the secondary sourced information and is true. Over to you, Glenn (Dr. Rowe).

**Dr. Rowe:** I was writing a case 3 or 4 years ago, and we thought it would be a secondary data case because we did not think we would get sign off from the company. I wrote the first draft of the case as if it were going to be a primary data case. Then one of my colleagues at Ivey Publishing, one of our product coordinators, said to me “Let me draft you a case as if this were going to be a secondary data case because I don’t think you are going to get sign off on this”. In fact, we did not intend to ask for sign off at the time. The good news is that we knew someone inside the company that was at a senior level so we sent it to him. It was for him to read to ask if we had any egregious errors, could he help us to correct them, etc. He really liked the case so he agreed to sign off on it and we were able to publish it as a primary data case. The point I am making is that I think you can create very good decisions from the perspective of the company instead of the CEO considering their options. You could write the opening paragraph, “should XYZ corporation do A or do B”, and all of a sudden you have a decision point. It does not have to be a particular person to whom you attribute the decision. Attribute the decision to the company, to the organization.

**Dr. Grandy:** My additional thought on the matter. It is also worth noting that while there are fewer solely secondary sourced cases published, the ones that we do publish in *CRJ* are high quality and very popular. We have authors here on the panel that are great examples of why you should write secondary data cases. Year over year, cases by Dr. Gujarathi and Dr. Harris, published in *CRJ*, are best-selling cases. While we publish fewer of them, what is being published is being used in classrooms worldwide and instructors really like them. I know Glenn (Dr. Rowe) you have some additional information on this.

<i>CRJ</i> Solely Secondary Sourced Cases 2015 - 2019			
Case Title	Year Volume Issue	Area	Authors
Facebook's Privacy Breach: Challenges of Managing an Information-Based Supply Chain Risk	2019, 39(2)	Strategic Management; Operational Risk Management; Information-Based Supply Chain; E-Services; Privacy Management; Ethical Decision Making	Maryam Memar Zadeh
Vista Outdoor: A Business Portfolio under Stress	2019, 39(2)	Strategic Management; Corporate Strategy; Related Diversification; Synergies; Corporate Social Responsibility; Growth-Share Matrix	John J. Lawrence
The Flint Water Crisis	2018, 38(2)	Organizational Behavior; Organizational Theory; Business Ethics; Public Administration; Crisis Management	Marie McKendall, Nancy M. Levenburg
Wells Fargo: Setting the Stagecoach Thundering Again	2017, 37(2)	Strategic Management; Responsible Leadership; Compensation Systems; Organizational Culture; Business Ethics; Corporate Governance	Mahendra R. Gujarathi, Samir Kumar Barua
General Motors and the Chevy Cobalt Ignition Switch Crisis	2017, 37(4)	Crisis Management; Strategic Planning; Bankruptcy	Randall Harris, W. Scott Sherman
The "Most Hated CEO" in America	2017, 37(4)	Economics; Price Discrimination; Government Regulation; Consumer Demand; Corporate Social Responsibility; Business Communication	Michael D. Jones
Strange Bedfellows: eBay, Craigslist and Profit versus Public Service	2016, 36(3)	Business Law; Corporate Governance; Business Ethics; Social Entrepreneurship	Sonia J. Toson
Facebook Folly at Northeast BMW (A)	2015, 35(2)	Human Resource Management; Disciplinary Action; Social Media Policy; Employment-at-will	Gabrielle R. Lopiano, Mary Anne Watson
The Branding of Club Atlético de Madrid: Local or Global	2015, 35(3)	International Business; International; Marketing; Sports Marketing ; Branding	Jeffrey W. Overby

Source: Dr. Gina Grandy

**Dr. Rowe:** I have some data on this topic. I did this analysis a few months ago, not even realizing we would be coming to NACRA for this presentation. Over the

last three years, amongst our best-selling cases, 7 out of 20, 8 out of 20, and last year 10 out of 20 of our best-selling Ivey cases using secondary sources actually out-sold field-based cases. Some of these cases are best sellers every year. If you look at each unique best seller for the last 3 years, you will notice that secondary cases are 15 of the 30 best sellers. Further, in fiscal year 2019, cases based on secondary sources out-sold field-based cases. I think the market test for secondary cases has been answered. At Ivey publishing, we can sell secondary data cases.

<b>Ivey Publishing Ivey Cases Published by Source</b>				
<b>Publication Date</b>	<b>Field Research # of Cases</b>	<b>Secondary Sources # of Cases</b>	<b>General Experience # of Cases</b>	<b>% Secondary Sources</b>
<b>2016</b>	272	108	22	27%
<b>2017</b>	246	87	14	25%
<b>2018</b>	245	97	14	27%
<b>2019 YTD</b>	160	68	14	28%

Source: Dr. Glenn Rowe

**Audience Member:** This question is directed at Gina (Dr. Grandy) as Editor of the *CRJ*. This is based on your earlier comment as to how you position the decision if you are to use secondary data. So instead of having a protagonist you have the company as the protagonist. Would that be acceptable to the *CRJ*? There is no clearly identified protagonist in the case.

**Dr. Grandy:** No, it would not be. I do not think Glenn was actually saying there was no protagonist in the case. I think what he was saying was that the start of his case was structured so that it would not be attributed to one person. He was not saying that there would not be a CEO in the case. I think what he was saying is that the framing of the actual decision would not be around the CEO. This is a nuanced point. Dr. Rowe is saying that you might get away with not having a clearly identified protagonist. For *CRJ*, that is less clear-cut. It is more likely to be considered acceptable with Ivey Publishing than with the *CRJ*, but it is not impossible.

## **HUMAN SUBJECTS AND ETHICAL ISSUES**

**Audience Member:** A question regarding company permissions. Do companies have to sign off if you have nothing to do with the company? Alternatively, do you still have to find somebody to sign off?

**Dr. Rowe:** Not for secondary sourced data.

**Dr. Grandy:** I know that Randall (Dr. Harris) has some thoughts regarding the ethics related to this. Dr. Harris?



**Dr. Harris:** Let me talk a little bit about the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR), which applies only to United States schools. CFR Title 45 Part 46 talks about what human subjects research is and so forth. Typically, data that comes from archival sources is exempt from review as human subjects research and, under the newly revised CFR standards; it may not even be considered research at all. For example, oral histories are no longer considered human subjects research. This means that field research that we would traditionally do for case studies may not need to be reviewed as human subjects research on your particular campus. The application of these regulations vary widely from campus to campus. You need to consult with your Institutional Review Board (IRB) on your campus to determine your particular circumstances. You may be clarifying whether it is or is not research for IRB purposes, you may be applying as exempt research, or you may be held to an even higher standard depending on your individual circumstances. Universities where IRB research violations and/or abuses have occurred will typically review even low-level exempt research at a much higher level of scrutiny.

**CFR Title 46 Part 46  
Protection of Human Subjects**

**§46.102 Definitions for Purposes of this Policy**

**(l) Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. For purposes of this part, the following activities are deemed not to be research:**

**(1) Scholarly and journalistic activities (e.g. oral history, journalism, biography, literary criticism, legal research, and historical scholarship), including the collection and use of information, that focus directly on the specific individuals about whom the information is collected.**

**§46.104 Exempt Research**

**(d)(4) Secondary Research for which consent is not required: Secondary research uses of identifiable private information or identifiable bio specimens, if at least one of the following criteria is met:**

- (i) The identifiable private information or identifiable bio specimens are publicly available:**
- (ii) Information, which may include information about bio specimens, is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot be readily ascertained.**

Source: U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, 2019, Retrieved at [https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title45/45cfr46\\_main\\_02.tpl](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title45/45cfr46_main_02.tpl)

**Dr. Harris:** Once we begin talking about human subjects research, it is also important to discuss the ethical issues invoked by our research. Without going into too much detail, in general you want to do no harm. That is of course the Hippocratic Oath. So the question becomes this: if you have Mark Zuckerberg, for example, deciding to do something that may or may not be ethical then are we protecting human subjects when we begin to discuss potentially unethical activities, even if the data is retrieved from publicly available sources? That is an open question.

My point is whether the data source is primary or secondary, there are still ethical implications to your actions. An example of this would be the Unauthorized

Disclosure case<sup>4</sup> where we had board leaks and then unethical investigation of the board leaks with the investigators crossing the line. In that case, we were discussing unethical and arguably illegal actions. The records were publicly available. Nevertheless, are you subjecting a human subject to potential harm based upon your own study of the case? Just because it is coming from archival records does not mean there are no ethical implications to your research. That is a very brief discussion of the point. I would urge everyone to consider that, regardless of data source, there are human subject implications to your case research. When you write the case, you are naming the subjects. Directly or indirectly, you are interacting with a human subject.

### Case Research and Ethics Basic Ethical Principles

1. **Respect for Persons.** First, individuals should be treated as autonomous agents. Second, persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection.
2. **Beneficence.** Persons are treated in an ethical manner not only by respecting their decisions and protecting them from harm, but also making efforts to secure their well-being.
3. **Justice.** Who ought to receive the benefits of research and bear its burdens? This is the question of justice, in the sense of “fairness of distribution” or “what is deserved”. Another way of conceiving the principle of justice is that equals ought to be treated equally.

Source: The Belmont Report, 1979

**Audience Member:** Dr. Harris, you made a point regarding doing no harm. How does disguising a case work or not work for that?

**Dr. Harris:** I have not disguised a case yet, so I cannot speak directly to that. However, the internet allows for unprecedented transparency. How well can we actually disguise things these days? That is an open question in my opinion.

**Dr. Rowe:** I can give you an example. We wrote a case on a law firm in the Far East, and three senior partners had to deal with a very difficult ethical decision, how to reimburse a client \$92 million U.S. after one of their mid-level associates had embezzled \$92 million. The reason that happened was because one of the three senior partners missed something in a contract and shortly after the case was resolved, he resigned from the firm. We actually got sign off from the senior partner of the firm allowing us to publish the case, but he asked us to disguise the case as a secondary data sourced case, because when it was published he did not want his colleague who had resigned to feel that he had been thrown under the bus by his senior partner. We disguised it as a secondary sourced case as a result. The discussion about ethics reminded me of that particular case.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AS A DATA SOURCE

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**Dr. Memar Zadeh:** A question for Glenn (Dr. Rowe). You mentioned social media data and ethics in another venue. Could you elaborate on that point now that we are discussing ethics?

**Dr. Rowe:** Yes, it was based on some discussion from one of our product coordinators at Ivey Publishing. It is one of the things we try to do in the editing stage. We have to make sure that the source of a quote or a particular piece of information is something that we are legally allowed to publish under Canada's laws. This is with respect to copyright and permission to publish, etc. We do that for two reasons. Number one, we want to protect our authors from undue legal action, and two, we want to protect Ivey Publishing from undue legal action. Believe it or not, we have been sued by someone in the Caribbean who for some reason took the lawsuit to a court in Georgia. It was thrown out because we had all the documentation we needed to get it thrown out. Social media is particularly hard, so we are more stringent with our authors who want to use a social media source for data. However, if you can convince us of its efficacy and we are confident that we can protect you and ourselves from legal action, then we will use social media data.

**Dr. Harris:** I would just like to comment on one aspect of that. Yahoo discussion boards are not good data sources.

**Dr. Rowe:** No, neither is Wikipedia. At Ivey Publishing if you put in Wikipedia as a source, we will tell you to take it out and find another source or not put that information in the case.

**Dr. Gujarathi:** There are many interesting situations that we would like to write about that never are published. No company officer likes to see a case that discusses situations where their company engaged in fraud or was unethical, such as earnings management. In these cases, it becomes imperative to disguise the data. However, there are limits to that because you do not want to make the case unrealistic. In such situations, getting data on the methods, motivations, and effects of earnings management are unlikely to be available from primary sources but one can develop good, rigorous and value-added cases using secondary data.

**Dr. Harris:** Back to the point about social media. I think I would like to comment on that. In the 2016 volume of the *Case Research Journal*, one of the cases had the plot revolve around a social media attack on the company. There were comments in the case that came from social media sources, and the social media comments were instrumental in changing the company's direction. The outcome of the case was the result of an attack occurring via social media. I would submit to you that while we do not have a good handle on it yet, I think social media as a research source for cases is really the frontier right now. The question I think I would like to pose is this: how do we use that information flow in a way that is beneficial to case research? I do not have a good answer for that, but I would like to pose it, and I am seeing signs that the *Case Research Journal* is beginning to grapple with it as well.

**Dr. Rowe:** Just to backup what Randall (Dr. Harris) has said. Ivey Publishing can put a social media citation in a case or the instructor's manual. Then, when you the instructor go to use the case, the link is often no longer available. You have to be careful using social media as a data source because sometimes the links go away. It is difficult from a publishing perspective to use and cite web and social media based sources of information, because the links and citations can be very fluid. Later users of our cases struggle to link back to the original web and social media citations that we publish at Ivey.

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## FINDING A DECISION POINT IN THE DATA

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**Dr. Memar Zadeh:** Okay, let us move on to the issue of finding the decision point for a case as you are conducting the research. There is a tremendous volume of data

that is typically collected for a secondary data case. Randall (Dr. Harris), in your IM, I think it was Goldman Sachs<sup>6</sup>, you state in your Instructor's Manual that you collected over 6,000 pages of archival data. Mahendra (Dr. Gujarathi), you state in your Wells Fargo<sup>7</sup> case Instructor's Manual that you used over 6 hours of testimony. After transcription and additional research, this could result in several thousand pages of documents. In my own secondary data case, I collected over 2,500 pages, and it was difficult to identify the decision at hand within that massive volume of data. I was wondering how you tackle the volume of data? Further, how do you get your cases shaped so that they align with the decision focus of the *Case Research Journal*?

**Dr. Gujarathi:** It does become challenging. For the Wells Fargo case, it must have been a couple of thousand pages of reading and I must have watched 15-20 hours of congressional testimony. It did not feel like work. I did the Wells Fargo case primarily because it grabbed my interest, and not because I wanted it published. When a major bank with assets of over \$1.8 trillion and a quarter million employees gets caught opening two million fraudulent accounts, my curiosity rose sky-high. How in the world could this happen? When you listen to the radio, read books and web pages, and watch the television on a topic that you are curious about; you do not count the hours or pages. After you try to connect the dots in your mind, a time comes when you say - this would make a fascinating teaching case. How do I now translate my scrambled-up thoughts into a publishable case? That is more of an art than a science. Taking all the data and bringing it into an organized and understandable form for student use is not easy. Moreover, you do not want to give away the answers so that students do some work when they read it. You want to engage them in critical thinking, problem-solving, and reflective analysis. It becomes a fascinating work. It takes countless hours but is very meaningful, in my experience.

**Dr. Harris:** I was working in California in the mid 2000's, and I saw people driving large vehicles that they could not afford. Many were living in houses that far exceeded the size of my own, and this led me to begin researching the real estate industry in California. Real estate led me to the financing of housing with companies such as Countrywide Financial, and that led me to the banks and the U.S. banking system. What began as the Countrywide Financial case then wound up being a case about Bank of America<sup>8</sup> except, during that time, approximately 2007, everything fell apart, and all roads then led to the investment bank Lehman Brothers<sup>9</sup>. What happened for me in that case was not that I was looking for a decision point. What happened was I was trying to understand what I was seeing around me in the world and in the process of writing about the crisis what I came to was a central junction. There was this huge Gordian knot that everything else revolved around, which was the decision by the investment bank Lehman Brothers to file for bankruptcy. I did not look for that decision point, that point found me, and it really just fell to me to write that about that moment in time. What has happened financially in our world since then has really been derivative of that moment as well.

The Goldman Sachs case was an afterthought, honestly. Goldman traders were making money on both sides of the financial market collapse. Goldman Sachs was trading the market, they started by going short, but then the market moved counter trend and some traders basically wanted to blow out the VAR<sup>10</sup> on some trades, they wanted to go long into a temporary market rally during the crash, and they were going to make billions on the trades. However, Goldman Sachs was not the real story of the 2007-2008 global financial crisis. The story was Lehman Brothers because that is what everything else revolved around. I do not know if that helps or not, but that is what happened.

**Dr. Gujarathi:** Writing about an idea that you are excited about is a very creative and exciting process. You do not feel tired even if you work a lot. Translating the idea into a case and then into a publication is exciting. Getting a quick hit in a journal is not a good reason to write the case. I have had several junior colleagues say to me, “Mahendra I want to write a case with you”. “Very good”, I say, “What is your idea?” “I don’t have any idea, but anything you can suggest we can work on”. When I probe into their reason to write a case, many cite a quick hit as the reason. My response is that you are talking to the wrong person. Recently, I had a case accepted for publication in *Issues in Accounting Education* after 719 days in the review process. It went through three rounds of review. It was brutal, and I hated it. Later on, I saw that the reviewers had important things to say which made the case better. However, it can take a year or more, sometimes two years to get it right. Being published was not the reason I did that case. I did it because the topic fascinated me, and I wanted to bring it into my classes, and the classes of my colleagues.

**Dr. Rowe:** Twenty years ago, a very bright young student came to me and said she would like to write a case. I said great. She wrote the case. The case was published at Ivey Publishing, and in the meantime, we had collected a banker’s box full of data, secondary data by the way. When I got to Ivey, we had a person there on sabbatical from University of Winnipeg and he and I got to talking one day, and we ended up coauthoring. We ended up writing three more cases out of the data in that banker’s box. That is how I got my first four cases at Ivey Publishing written. It was all from secondary data. Further, both institutions I have worked at allow students to write cases for course credit. Probably 10 or 15 of my 55 published cases have come from working with undergraduate and MBA students. With me as their supervisor providing very stringent oversight, some of my better selling cases have come from MBA students. That is one way to handle secondary data; turn it over to an MBA student if you have that option.

**Dr. Memar Zadeh:** I just want to make a point about the way I myself handled the data in my case. I used some of the knowledge and background that I had from grounded theory. I treated the data the way I would do any qualitative research, and I tried to look for repetitive patterns. That is how I actually found the decision point for my case. It was not quite as straightforward at the beginning because of the volume of data, but gradually as I was rereading it, I started to see repetitive patterns and eventually I arrived at the decision point for the case.

## **REVIEWING CASES BASED UPON SECONDARY DATA**

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**Dr. Memar Zadeh:** I am going to conclude this session with an overview from the perspective of case reviewers. What do you find challenging when you review cases based upon secondary data?

**Dr. Harris:** We are back to the quality of your data. One of the challenges I face when reviewing for the *Case Research Journal* is that secondary data case authors struggle to present quality data in their cases. That is why I really tried to push on the definition of secondary data to give authors clear guidance regarding what to look for in their research. We are really looking for firsthand accounts and firsthand artifacts from the activities of the organization whether that be an electronic email or whether that be some type of direct statement by a protagonist. The quality of the data is really a challenge for many authors that write from secondary sources.

**Dr. Gujarathi:** On this point, I am going to say the same thing that I said earlier. Authors present too much data in their case. When you want to say something, you

should only include what is necessary for the students to answer the questions in the Instructor's Manual. If you throw in 15 years of financials and eight exhibits that are only tertiary in relation to the focus of the case, the case becomes unnecessarily long and complex. As a reviewer, I would say you could do better. Cut it down.

**Dr. Grandy:** I will say two things. One I have already said. First, Randall (Dr. Harris) talked about the quality of data. I am going to rephrase that, and say that reviewers struggle with the trustworthiness of the data used. This is essentially the same point as Randall (Dr. Harris). Second, authors struggle with identifying a clear decision point. These are the two challenges that I see with secondary sourced cases.

### Ivey Publishing

#### Challenges when Reviewing Cases Sourced from Secondary Data

- Reviewers experience difficulties evaluating and assessing secondary data sources in a timely fashion.
- Reviewers struggle to evaluate cases with poor data sources, or data sources that are suspect from a scholarly point of view.
- More secondary data usage requires more time for Ivey copy editors to verify information and sources.
- Cases based upon previously published information require appropriate and sufficient footnotes.
- Sourcing social media is practically unavoidable for business cases in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but adds additional complexities for case writers and publishers.

Source: Dr. Glenn Rowe

**Dr. Rowe:** At Ivey Publishing, when a case comes in it is reviewed by a product coordinator who then gets a faculty member at Ivey business school to review the case for content. He or she may also have a look at the quality of the data. Then, it goes back to the product coordinator who sends it to a copy editor that is well trained, and they actually assess the quality of the data sources and give recommendations back to the product coordinator. The product coordinator is then responsible for assessing the quality of the data based on the recommendations from the copy editor. Then, it may go to a second copy editor. After this, it goes back to the author. This can iterate several times, but decisions are made around the quality of the data and any potential legal liability. As I said earlier, one of the key issues is whether we can ensure you as the author and us as Ivey Publishing that we are not going to be sued.

**Dr. Memar Zadeh:** Thank you very much everyone.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Memar Zadeh, M. (2019). “Facebook’s Privacy Breach: Challenges of Managing an Information-Based Supply Chain Risk.” *Case Research Journal*, 39(2), pp. 1-19. Available at <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/home/>.

<sup>2</sup> Gujarathi, M. & Barua, S. (2017). “Wells Fargo: Setting the Stagecoach Thundering Again”. *Case Research Journal*, 37(2), pp. 81-106. Available at <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/home/>.

<sup>3</sup> Gujarathi, M. (2019) Diamond Foods, Inc.: A Comprehensive Case in Financial Analysis and Valuation. *Issues in Accounting Education*, 34(1), pp. 13-33.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence, A., Harris, R. & Baack, S. (2008). “Unauthorized Disclosure: Hewlett-Packard’s Secret Surveillance of Directors and Journalists.” *Case Research Journal*, 28(1), pp. 13-28. Available at <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/home/>.

<sup>5</sup> Shah, G., Rovenpor, J., & Jafar, M. (2016). “A Brand under Attack: The Boycott of Stolli Vodka and the Power of Social Media”. *Case Research Journal*, 36(2), pp. 1-20. Available at <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/home/>

<sup>6</sup> Harris, R. (2014). “Goldman Sachs and the Big Short: Time to Go Long?” *Case Research Journal*, 34(2), pp. 133-162. Available at <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/home/>.

<sup>7</sup> Gujarathi, M. & Barua, S. (2017). “Wells Fargo: Setting the Stagecoach Thundering Again”. *Case Research Journal*, 37(2), pp. 81-106. Available at <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/home/>.

<sup>8</sup> Harris, R. & Kotrozo, J. (2010). “Bank of America: The Merrill Lynch Acquisition.” Proceedings of the North American Case Research Association Annual Meeting, Gatlinburg, TN.

<sup>9</sup> Harris, R. (2012). “Lehman Brothers: Crisis in Corporate Governance.” *Case Research Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 1. pp. 123-144. Available at <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/home/>.

<sup>10</sup> Value at Risk. Value at risk (VAR) is a quantitative method for managing risk.