Every day and every time we can access to Internet through our small smart devices. What it means that we are living in Digital Age. It is same to the social science field. More social scientists focus on the digitalized data. These kinds of data are different form the traditional experimental data that social scientists used so we have to pay attention when we deal with the digitalized data. Especially the concerns regarding privacy, personal information protection, atomicity is uprising in Digital Age. Within this context, thinking about ethics is significant when we use digitalized dataset in the research. This issue can be applied into "Taste, Ties, and Time" study. I will assess this study’s adherence to Salganik’s four principles of ethical research and explain why I would not use the data for my research.

The study titled "Taste, Ties, and Time" have led many controversial ethics issues because of their released data collected from Facebook. The data was the profile data of an entire class (approximately 1,700) of students at a private college in the Northeast United States. The findings of this research were how their social relationships changes over time by subgroup defined by gender, race etc. Salgnaik introduces Four principles which can be the guide line for researchers having ethical concerns. First principle is Respect for Persons. The Belmont Report argues that Respect for persons is about the concepts that people should be treated as autonomous and people with diminished autonomy should have additional protection. In Taste, Ties, and Time, researchers did not keep the principle of Respect for Persons researcher used the collected data of an entire class without informed consent, notice and Terms of Services. The researchers should have gotten their consent before using their data. They could have gotten these forms of consent after the study end but they did not. The researchers should have informed to the participants that they could have any forms of harms in the future as their information dataset used in the research. Although they just offered their personal information as measure, it does not mean that they give all authority to utilize their privacy. The study should have conducted under the condition that all participants were well aware of potential hazard and how their information would be used. Second principle is Beneficence and it means that researchers do not harm participants and maximize potential benefits and minimize potential harm. Within this principle, the researchers have to do risk/benefit analysis and decide ethical balance. In Taste, Ties, and Time, the researchers did not keep this principle. They believed that they removed the potential risk because they deleted or encoded all identifying information. But actually, it was not true and people found the anonymous university easy after the data released. The researchers also did not screen out the participants who have potential risk to secure their research and they did not offer any of counselling services to reduce afterward adverse event. The researchers did not prepare or offer any cushion to the participants after data source revelation. Turning to respect to the impact on outers, the researchers provoked fear of potential privacy risk. Third principle is Justice and is about the fair-distribution of risks and benefits. It should not the one group’s burden or prize. It is quite clear In Taste, Ties, and Time. The risk went to the participants and the opposite group, the researchers had benefits. Here, the benefits mean both positive and negative. Positive benefits could be the findings of the research, following studies, requests of collected data seat etc. and negative benefits could be the public recognition of potential risk the fact that private information can be used anytime without consent. The last principle is Respect of Law and Public Interest and it deals with compliance and transparency-based accountability. I think the researchers met this principle in Taste, Ties, and Time. They did not conduct their research in secret and explicitly describe their goal on the paper. They had an issue with the procedure of conducting the research and the ways dealing the participants and dataset. At least, their finding has implication on the individual behavior changes on the social network service over time.

Regarding above the collected dataset of an entire freshman class of anonymous university from Facebook, I would not use this data to conduct my own research. First, I think the treatment of the data set is not perfect from ethics issue and still contains private information itself. If it is true that the researchers of the study deleted or encoded identifying information in that dataset, no one could not find the identity of the source of the dataset that quickly. Using the codebook and given information on that research project (an approximately 1,700 students of an entire class at a private college in the Northeast United States), people could narrow down to 13 possible universities and deducted to Harvard College very quickly. This revelation means that the researchers could not understand what data they were dealing with and what features the data had. Their treatment of data was not appropriate. They did not get the informed consent form the students and even after the study ends. Their information had been kept tracking 4 years. The participants did not know that and of course, they did not get noticed. I think this is the violation of privacy. Second, I think that secondary use of dataset is thoroughly privacy violation of 1,700 students. When we use the Facebook service, we can change setting to show the profile information to specific group. However, when it comes to the converted data-set, anyone can access to the private data information. That is, even if the participants set their information access restriction to their acquaintance, whenever their data converted and the information will open to secondary user. Similarly, after the enactment of Antiterrorism Law in Korea, Kakaotalk(Korean social network service) has to provide even their user’s private secret mode chatting records to the government. Many users felt privacy violation so they left the service. Third, as my perspective, the private information on that social network service is not genuine in many case, so I cannot trust the reliability and validity of the collected data set. People tend to show happy, glorious moments on their social network space and wants to show themselves as good person so people often manipulate their feelings on posts or post their fake profile. They even lied to get more likes to their post. Plotting a self-fabricated scenario in Facebook was a huge issue once in Asia. There is possibility that some of participants do not posted their genuine profile. Also in Taste, Ties, and Time study, the participants did not have informed consent or contacted to correct wrong information or exclude for undesirable information. For above reasons, I would not include the collected dataset from Facebook in my own research and take risk afterward.

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