**Short Paper #1: Ethics of “ Taste, Ties, and Times”**

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   The T3 project-“Taste, Ties, and Times” was removed from the Internet and can not be used by other researchers nowadays due to its “failure to adhere to ethical research standard”(Zimmer 2010). In this passage I will use Salganik’s four principles to assess this T3 project from ethical research perspective: “ identification of stakeholders and informed consent; balancing risks and benefits; fairness and equity; and compliance, transparency and accountability, respectively (Dittrich, Kenneally, and others 2011)

The first principle of Salganik’s four principles of ethical research is “Respect for persons”. However, the “Taste, Ties, and Times”, which refer to 3T project, obviously does not pay enough attention on this point. The most important part of this principle is “respect”. First, to be respectful, participants should be informed consent, which means participants should be presented with relevant information in a comprehensible format and then should voluntarily agree to participate. In this project, the researchers just got permission from Facebook and the collage. Although, Kevin also mentioned that “The college also agreed to provide additional data on these students, such as we are able to link each Facebook profile with official student housing record” (K. lewis et al., 2008), it doesn’t represent all students who involved in this project get informed and agree to participate in this research. Even though informed consent is not always necessary during research because some studies rely on deception, as risks of the experiment increased, need for consent increases. In this case, the risks need to be considered. The Facebook data may be sensitive because the European Union defined “an identifiable person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identification number or to one or more factors specific to his physical, physiological, mental, economic, cultural or social identity”(European Union Data Protection Directive, 1995). The researchers of this project must learn to know individuals with special characteristics have high possibility to be extracted from data and identified. Once the students in this selected test group identified by others, their privacy will not be compromised. Second, this T3 project shows the insufficiency of privacy protect. Although it reassures no students were contact for additional information (K. lewis et al., 2008), this research design has flaws. Research assistant from source instituted was hired to see every student Facebook profile and collect useful information. From the same institution, so there is high probability that RA are in lot of students Facebook network. So he or she has access to their profile which perhaps set limit to public. Let’s assume that part of students who decide only share their Facebook within their network do not wish their data and privacy released to public. This T3 project will definitely break the “respect” principle because it enforces students to contribute their data to public and doesn’t let participants to decide whether they are willing to do so.

   The second principle and third principle of ethic is Beneficence, which means maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms this research will bring, at the same time distribute the burdens and benefits of research. To do so, scientists need to do risk and benefit analysis and then make a decision whether the benefits balance the risk. In this 3T project, I don’t think it follow this rule because researchers didn’t evaluate the risk properly. “Jason Kaufman, the project's principal investigator and a research fellow at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet & Society, points out that data were redacted to minimize the risk of identification. No student seems to have suffered any harm”.(Parry.M, 2011) He didn’t realize that someone might figure out individual student’s identities. Such information may be access to illegal organization or criminals that can be harmful to individual students. Although T3 project has considerable risk, it also has possible benefits not only to sociologists, but also for the whole society. Such study can give us a new perspective to see how friendships and interests of culture evolve and how race or culture tastes affect social network. It’s a great scientific benefit for human.

The third principle of research ethic is justice. According to Salganik, researches should be conducted under the premise of fairness, equity and compliance. The main concern in the T3 research that violates the third principle is its data collection process.  “The data was extracted directly from Facebook without direct interaction with the subjects or reliance on self-reporting instruments, either of which could taint the data collected.” (Zimmer, 2010) Clearly, the students are not aware that their information has been used for a research purpose. If the T3 research was conducted on a voluntary base, which is much more compliant with Salganik’s principle of research ethic, the size of available data would be much smaller and less representative. So I can definitely understand the data collection process of the T3 project but I do not think it could be labeled as justice under the principle of research ethic.

   The last principle is respect for law and public interest. The Important key word is transparency: open your method and process to public. Honestly speaking, the T3 project does not fail in this principle. Their dataset is maintained under the IQSS Dataverse Network at Harvard University, and can be located by URL(K. lewis et al., 2008). Also they released comprehensive codebook which explains all of their detail coding process and the step they take to compromise students’ privacy to public. So this T3 project is transparent to public about their method and process.

   As for me, I would not use this data for my own research because the T3 project hides several ethical concerns, which can grow severer in future. From the research design and its’ final approval of IRB, we can realize there is still a conceptual gap about how to compromise privacy of subjects in the research. Although the researchers came up with some ways to protect individual's’ privacy, such as removal student's’ name and delay the release of culture interest, even set a term of use statement as a reminder if scientists want to access to this dataset, they still ignore some important points. For example, users who want to get into the datasets can fast skip such agreement. T3 researched need to figure out a way to monitor and enforce enterers. The scientists really need to think about possible ethical concerns when they design the whole experiment.

**References:**

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