**Seminar 3 - Case Study: Privacy**

Please read the case below and answer the questions. You need to determine the ethical issues involved with this case.

**The Case**

Ricardo works for the records department of his local government as a computer records clerk, where he has access to files of property tax records. For a scientific study, a researcher, Beth, has been granted access to the numerical portion “but not the corresponding names” of some records.

Beth finds some information that she would like to use, but she needs the names and addresses corresponding with certain properties. Beth asks Ricardo to retrieve these names and addresses, so she can contact these people for more information and for permission to do further study.

Now consider, what are the ethical issues involved in deciding which of these options to pursue?

* If Ricardo is not responsible for determining allowable access, should he release the names and addresses? No
* Suppose Ricardo were responsible for determining allowable access to the files. What ethical issues would be involved in his deciding whether to grant access to Beth?

Ricardo would have to consider the laws and ethics in data processing (Almada, 2020). Can the research be done within the guidelines of the Data Protection Act as well as the organisation’s privacy policy? Guidance should be sought from the compliance department of the local government.

* Should Beth be allowed to contact the individuals involved? That is, should the Records department release individuals' names to a researcher? What are the ethical issues for the Records department to consider?

Beth should not be allowed to contact the individuals involved considering the fact that she does not originally have access to the data. The authorised personnel in this case Ricardo should contact the individuals asking their permission to participate in the research whilst making sure that all necessary information has been provided to the individuals.

* Suppose Beth contacts the individuals to ask their permission, and one-third of them respond giving permission, one-third respond denying permission, and one-third do not respond. Beth claims that at least one-half of the individuals are needed to make a valid study. What options are available to Beth?

Ricardo could explore alternative contact option for those individuals that do not respond in a bit to enough data for a valid study.

**References**

Almada, M. (2020) Ethics in data processing: three compliance issues. DOI:[10.13140/RG.2.2.14660.65927](http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.14660.65927)