Data&Society

Call for Case Studies in Data Ethics

Council for Big Data, Ethics, and Society[1]

As part of its network expansion, the Council for Big Data, Ethics, and Society is commissioning original case studies.

The Council is seeking researchers, practitioners, and educators to write case studies based on real-world examples that examine complex issues of data ethics. A case study should describe a situation in which an ethical conundrum arose, and how responding to that situation introduced conflicting ethical duties, responsibilities, or principles. Situations used for case studies may involve data collection, publishing, aggregation, or analytics and illustrate topics such as privacy, de/re-identification, accuracy and quality control, cultural representation, oversight and accountability, or social outcomes of research. Examples from industry, government, and academia are welcome.

Completed case studies will become part of a collection of pedagogical resources for instructors covering data ethics in various fields, and will be used to generate discussion through live and/or online discussion forums of part of ongoing work by the Council. The case studies may be distributed via the Council, Data & Society, and the National Online Ethics Center (hosted by the National Academies of Engineering). Authors are also welcome to submit their case studies for publication.

Potential topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

• whether researchers should use data mining tools that correlate data across many public databases and risk revealing sensitive information about human subjects;

• what to do when publicly available anonymous data can be reidentified;

• how engineering choices made by a data company affect newsworthy events;

• how to use scientific data that is viewed differently in different cultural contexts;

• whether security researchers should make use of illicitly available data about logins;

• how tracking some K-12 student data may re-enforce inequities;

• how data-intensive policing interacts with matters of public policy;

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- when journals and conferences might reject submissions for ethical lapses;

- how scientists should navigate disciplinary norms for when to make data public;

- how 'sharing economy' companies (such as Uber, AirBnB, etc.) make use of data about employee-contractors and/or customers;

- how dating apps choose to shape user experience;

- government uses of automation for achieving public services and goods, such as enrollment in public assistance or voter registration;

- the use of big data in warfare;

- tensions between the degrees of freedom afforded to academic researchers vs. commercial researchers/practitioners;

- privacy of geotagged big data, such as mobile phone, social media, and GPS data, especially the use of geotagged data by third parties for uses such as advertising, credit worthiness or insurance rates;

- the use of social media data for financial purposes, such as Facebook's patent on a method for determining credit worthiness based on one's peer network.

- etc. etc.

A robust case study consists of a roughly 1,000-word description of narrative and background describing an actual situation faced by big data scientists or practitioners, along with collateral materials. It should be rich with context and be usable in a variety of instructional situations. We encourage submissions that include multimedia components and are not presented solely with text. Please choose cases that lack obvious solutions or simplistic scenarios, go beyond conflicts between theorists and commentators, and contain timely and relevant issues that are relatable to multiple situations (please avoid narrow or overly technical issues).

We have published a sample case study written by Council member Arvind Narayanan and Bendert Zevenbergen, "No Encore for Encore? Ethical questions for web-based censorship measurement," that demonstrates the quality we are looking for. Please see: http://bdes.datasociety.net/council-output/case-study-no-encore-for-encore/. This case study is meant only to be an exemplar, and is not a template. We anticipate a variety of formats, lengths, and styles, which will be tailored to authors' expertise and intended audiences.

Authors retain the copyright to their works, but agree to offer us a non-exclusive license to distribute
and publicize the case study, including through third parties. Authors may also publish their case

studies in their home institution or peer review journals. In addition, researchers will receive $250 as an honorarium for sharing their case study with us. (Please note: We can only pay for folks who can legally receive money in the United States.)

Proposals should be sent to <u>bdes@datasociety.net</u> by June 1, 2016. To propose a topic, please provide the following in a 1-page document:

1. Your name, title, affiliation, email, and URL.

2. Your area of expertise.

3. A brief description of a concrete, actionable ethical conflict that will form the basis of your case study. The core of you case study should be actual situations, not hypotheticals. You can draw on encounters you've faced or witnessed, and/or draw on public materials. If some degree of anonymization is necessary to protect vulnerable actors in the scenario please indicate that. Be sure to specify what ethical responsibilities, principles, or legal or governance issues arise.

4. What expert opinions and additional materials will you include? Please indicate if you will provide any additional commentaries by other experts. Please indicate if you will include commentaries showing different perspectives."

5. Describe your target audience(s) and how you will shape the case study to meet their needs.

5. Please indicate any multimedia that you plan to use or create (podcasts, interviews, short animations, slide shows, properly licensed clips from films or TV shows, etc.)? If you plan to produce media with your case study, additional honoraria may be available for any artistic collaborators.

6. Please provide the length of time you will need to complete the case study.