ONLINE MATERIAL A (DE BEL & VAN DUIJN, 2024): ETHICAL CLEARANCE AND GDPR COMPLIANCE

The Lifelines protocol was approved by the UMCG Medical ethical committee (METc) under number 2007/152. As the participants in the proposed social network study were not assigned to a medical treatment or behavioural intervention, the METc declared the study not subject to the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act (WMO) (reference number 2017/161). Hence, the research proposal was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the Sociology Department for review[1] and approved (reference number ECS-171017).

Data collection and data storage in Lifelines studies is managed in a protected computer environment, not easily adaptable to a multi-actor survey (developed in Qualtrics (2005)). To guarantee the safety and anonymity of data collected outside the system, in concurrence with the GDPR, a data processing agreement (DPA) was drafted and signed by the legal department. The legal advisor also provided guidance in the procedure to approach family members who are not Lifelines participants and only reachable through a Lifelines respondent, i.e., the central (divorced) parent(s), also called 'contact persons'. Contact persons informed their family members about the study and once family members notified the contact person that they gave permission to be informed about the study we could contact them.

The use of names is a current topic of debate in social network research (Kadushin, 2005; Tubaro et al., 2021). It is easier for respondents to report about the relationships with specific family members by using their names. Their family members, however, may not have been asked for permission to use and store their names. In order to do justice to these concerns we followed the legal advice to explicitly ask family members for their consent to the use of their name in the questionnaire for their family members, even if they did not want to participate in the study as a respondent. Family members not consenting to the use of their name were described by their family role, such as "John's mother".

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[1] http://www.nethics.nl/Gedragscode-Ethical-Code/

References

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