Reviewer's report

Title: Technical challenges of providing record linkage services for research

Version: 2 Date: 7 November 2013

Reviewer: Vassilios S Verykios

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Major Compulsory Revisions

The work presented in this study refers to some guidelines that need to be taken into consideration when some kind of incremental linking is in place. Even though different options are presented with respect to the grouping of similar records no evaluation is presented to shed light into this process.

There is also no particular algorithm provided to explain the exact process that should be followed so that the linkage is accomplished, under different scenarios.

I am also aware of another older piece of work by Mauricio A. Hernández and Salvatore J. Stolfo: Real-world Data is Dirty: Data Cleansing and The Merge/Purge Problem. Data Min. Knowl. Discov. 2(1): 9-37 (1998) that talks about a similar approach of linking data in phases, that need to be taken into consideration by the current work.

A reference regarding privacy preserving record linkage is missing, since the authors talk about the process of outsourcing the record linkage process where the privacy of the records is in danger.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'