Week 6: Privacy II
February 16, 2022
Perspectives on Privacy
Today’s Class – why violation of privacy is an ethical challenge
Information Disclosures
Rewards or Loyalty Programs
Body Scanners
Implanted Chips
AI/Machine Learning
Secondary Uses of Information
How is secondary information used? Some examples...
Google’s Personalized Search
Collaborative Filtering
Microtargeting
Credit Reports
How Target Figured Out A Teen Girl Was Pregnant Before Her Father Did
Class Discussion

• If you voluntarily have your body scanned at a departmental store, who should own that information: you or the store?

• Should the store have the right to sell your body measurements to other business?
Sharing of Anonymized Datasets
“Anonymized” data really isn’t—and here’s why not

Companies continue to store and sometimes release vast databases of "...

The Massachusetts Group Insurance Commission had a bright idea back in the mid-1990s—it decided to release "anonymized" data on state employees that showed every single hospital visit. The goal was to help researchers, and the state spent time removing all obvious identifiers such as name, address, and Social Security number. But a graduate student in computer science saw a chance to make a point about the limits of anonymization.

Latanya Sweeney requested a copy of the data and went to work on her "reidentification" quest. It didn't prove difficult. Law professor Paul Ohm describes Sweeney's work:

"At the time GIC released the data, William Weld, then Governor of Massachusetts, assured the public that GIC had protected patient privacy by deleting identifiers. In
AOL Search Dataset
Almost all information can be “personal” when combined with enough other relevant bits of data.
Privacy from the Individual Perspective (Acquisti et al 2015)

What should the individual be doing?
Individualistic Approach – privacy is a private good

- Trust people’s ability to make self-interested decisions
  - The “Get over it” brigade
  - Zuckerbollocks – privacy is a private good (O’Hara 2013)
With respect to the individualistic approach, scholars question people’s ability to manage privacy amid increasingly complex trade-offs.

(Acquisti et al 2015)
Are individuals up to the challenge of navigating privacy in the information age?

(Acquisti et al 2015)
Privacy as a public good?

• Even when the individual would rather be transparent and open to scrutiny, exposure will affect others.

• Accountability

• Security

• Trading data and market efficiency

• Chilling effects

(O’Hara 2013)
EU’s “Right to be Forgotten”

- Also known as the "right to erasure", the rule gives EU citizens the power to demand data about them be deleted.
Google had argued that the obligation could be abused by authoritarian governments trying to cover up human rights abuses were it to be applied outside of Europe.
Privacy as a public good

- Need to balance the interests of the subjects of data against the power of commercial entities and governments holding that data

(O’Hara 2013)