


CS 3001-C: Computing, Society, and Professionalism

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Week 6: Privacy I
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With your permission, you give us more permission. If you give us information about who some of your friends are, we can probably use some of that information, again, with your permission, or improve the quality of our searches. We don't need you to type at all, because we know where you are, with your permission. We know where you have been, with your permission. We can more or less guess what you are thinking about. – *Eric Schmidt, Google CEO (The Atlantic)*

Technology Erodes Privacy

- Information collection, exchange, combination, and distribution easier than ever means less privacy
- Scott McNealy (Sun Microsystems) in 1999: “You have zero privacy anyway. Get over it.”
- Zuckerberg in 2010 said that the social norm is to share everything, so people are little concerned about their privacy.



Perspectives on Privacy

An Old Definition of Privacy

- Privacy rights have evolved from property rights: “a man’s home is his castle”; no one should be allowed in without permission
- Privacy: “right to be left alone”
 - Samuel Warren (Harvard graduate businessman) and Louis Brandeis (Boston attorney; later Supreme Court justice)
 - Influential paper from 1890
- This led to 3rd Amendment to U.S. Constitution – principle of home as a sanctuary in the Bill of Rights:

No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

Is There a Natural Right to Privacy?

- Judith Jarvis Thomson: the definition of privacy as “the right to be left alone” is problematic
 - Smith being monitored at his home with a video camera without his knowledge – he is left alone technically, but it is a privacy violation
- Judith Jarvis Thomson: “Privacy rights” overlap other rights; violation of privacy is often a violation of some other right in this cluster
- *Conclusion: Privacy is not a natural right, but it is a prudential right*

Modern Definition of Privacy

- Privacy is a “zone of inaccessibility”
- Privacy related to notion of access
 - Privacy is not “being alone”, but defining who has access to what
- Access
 - Physical proximity to a person
 - Knowledge about a person
- Regarding access – where to draw the line between private and public
- *Privacy is a social arrangement that allows individuals to have some level of control over who is able to gain access to their physical selves and their personal information*

Benefits of Privacy

- Individual growth
 - Necessary to blossom into a unique individual
- Individual responsibility
- Freedom to be yourself
 - Nobody likes to be videotaped all the time
- Intellectual and spiritual growth
- Development of loving, trusting, caring, intimate relationships

Harms of Privacy

- Cover for illegal or immoral activities
- Burden on the nuclear family
- Hidden dysfunctional families
 - Incidents of domestic violence
- Ignored people on society's fringes
 - People with disability e.g., with mental illness



Class Discussion 1: Secret Monitoring

Rule Utilitarian Evaluation



Social Contract Theory Evaluation



Kantian Evaluation

Summary





Information Disclosures



But where to draw the
line?

Public Records



Medical Records



Rewards or Loyalty Programs

Facebook Tags




Body Scanners




Implanted Chips





The newfound privacy conundrum presented by installing a device that can literally listen to everything you're saying represents a chilling new development in the age of internet-connected things. By buying a smart speaker, you're effectively paying money to let a huge tech company surveil you. And I don't mean to sound overly cynical about this, either. Amazon, Google, Apple, and others say that their devices aren't spying on unsuspecting families. The only problem is that these gadgets are both hackable and prone to bugs.

– Gizmodo about Amazon Echo/Google Home etc.



Is using Alexa or Google
Home a violation of
privacy?