Privacy

Lecture 5-1

Computers & Society (CPSC 430)

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Is There a Natural Right to Privacy?

- Morton Levine: Privacy rights stem from property rights
  - “a man’s home is his castle”

- Warren and Brandeis: An explicit “right to be let alone”
  - Noted that libel and slander laws don’t prevent people from saying mean, true things about you

- Thomson: violations of “Privacy rights” are also violations of other rights
  - So, we don’t need to treat privacy separately

- Benn and Reiman: Some amount of privacy is necessary for people to be autonomous, moral agents, to develop healthy relationships, and to act as free citizens.

- *Is privacy a right?*

- *Is it a “prudential right”?*
  - worth recognizing for the good of society, though not a natural right

- *Or do we have no such right at all?*
Privacy and Trust

• Modern life more private
• Challenge: living among strangers
• Remedy: establishing reputations
  – Ordeal, such as lie detector test or drug test
  – Credential, such as driver’s license, key, ID card, college degree
• Establishing reputation is done at the cost of reducing privacy
Ways Information Becomes Public

- Rewards or loyalty programs
- Body scanners
- Digital video recorders
- Automobile “black boxes”
- Enhanced 911 service
- RFIDs
- Implanted chips
- Cookies
- Spyware

...can you think of others?
Information Privacy

“It should be illegal for shopping malls to install cameras for tracking customer behavior.”

A total of 80 vote(s) in 74 hours

- 5 (6% of users) Strongly Agree
- 20 (25% of users) Agree
- 13 (16% of users) Neutral
- 34 (43% of users) Disagree
- 8 (10% of users) Strongly Disagree
Data Mining

- Data mining
  - Searching for patterns or relationships in one or more databases
  - This info typically provided by the customer for another purpose

- Many internet services provided as an opportunity to gather valuable data
  - Google; Facebook; free online courses

- Also performed by the government
  - Efforts to detect terrorism via phone, bank, travel records
  - Tax audits

- Questions:
  - Ownership: do you have any rights over info about transactions in which you participated?
  - Ethics: what data mining activities are unethical? Which are ethical?
  - Does it make a difference whether DM is opt-in or opt-out?
  - At what point does DM become “creepy”?
  - Should we worry about ending up in a “personalization bubble”?