

Jim Samson
CS371 Computer Ethics and Technical Communication
John Quan
Assignment 2
September 14, 2017

Data Collection of Personal Information

The collection of personal data by the Institutions and the US Governments is not new. For years, the Federal Government had been quietly collecting billions of bytes worth of data – phone calls, emails, photos, and videos. The algorithm that has been used by the NSA relies on metadata tags to classify information systematically. They can use this data to find suspicious behavior of individuals without fear of violating the law. A former National Security Agent, Edward Snowden, leaked documents that exposed information to thousands of people worldwide. Now companies are collecting personal data – names, phone numbers, date of birth, credit card information, etc.

Companies such as Apple, uses the data for “internal purposes such as auditing, data analysis, and research to improve Apple’s products, services, and customer communications.” (Apple Inc., 2016). The data they are collecting is used to improve advanced computing fields like artificial intelligence or machine learning. One might argue, is that Apple does protect each of their customer’s privacy using complex encryptions like Transport Layer Security (TLS) and algorithms. What does this mean for the public? The consumers may not be able to understand the complexities why Apple is using their data for improving algorithms in their system. They might justify that Apple is taking their information to breach their privacy, such as interests, hobbies, and other information that describes a person. It brings the Roomba, a robot vacuum sales

company, was allegedly reported to be selling a map of your home to companies like Google, Amazon, or Google.

What exactly happened? Maggie Astor, a news reporter from The New York Times, claims “High-end models of Roomba, iRobot’s robotic vacuum, collect data as the clean, ... but it also creates a map of your home that iRobot can share with Amazon, Apple or Google.” (Astor, 2017). Well, there is no proof that the vacuum company is ever going to sell the map of your home. Brian Heater, a news reporter from Tech Crunch, confirms that the company never said they were planning to sell information to a third party (Heater, 2017). The company was never going to sell data of their users to neighboring companies. Is data mining for personal information for the greater good, ethical?

The first three paragraphs stated the government’s secrets, Apple Inc. personal information mining, and the iRobot’s data collection of a consumer’s home. In an ethical sense, the data that has been collected is mostly for the greater good. The knowledge that a company found, can be useful for someone like a person who needs a special drug for their disease. Companies such as IBM built an Artificial Intelligence (AI) machine that takes patient data to train the AI and helps health professionals manage effective health care. Some would argue in a utilitarian sense, that consumers would be happy for a company that used their personal data to find a classical movie or to find new music to listen to. It comes to conclusion, that we should trust software engineers who designed the algorithm to use it for the greater good.

References

Pappalardo, J. (2013, September 11). *NSA Data Mining: How It Works*. Retrieved from [http://www.popularmechanics.com/military/a9465/nsa-data-mining-how-it-works-](http://www.popularmechanics.com/military/a9465/nsa-data-mining-how-it-works-15910146/)

[15910146/](http://www.popularmechanics.com/military/a9465/nsa-data-mining-how-it-works-15910146/)

Apple Privacy Policy. (2016, September 12). *Apple Privacy*. Retrieved from Apple <https://www.apple.com/privacy/privacy-policy/>

Astor, Maggie. (2017, July 25). *Your Roomba May Be Mapping Your Home, Collecting Data That Could Be Shared*. Retrieved from

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/25/technology/roomba-irobot-data-privacy.html?mcubz=1>

Heater, Brian. (2017, July 28). *iRobot's CEO says the company never planned to sell Roomba home mapping data*. Retrieved from

https://techcrunch.com/2017/07/28/irobots-ceo-says-the-company-never-planned-to-sell-roomba-home-mapping-data/?ncid=rss&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=sfgplus&sr_share=googleplus&%3Fncid=sfgplus