

The State of Government Surveillance

Ever thought about going “off the grid” or wanted to get away from all your technical devices? What causes that feeling? The feeling to just get away or have a moment to yourself while others can not contact you or get the temptation to check a text message, email, or social media site. That feeling is called privacy—a moment when no one knows what you are doing or thinking. The need for this privacy is not to commit an criminal act but a time for you to have a private moment to yourself or with another person. Privacy is also part of our natural right it is part of our DNA it is something that we yearn for at times. This natural right should also cross over to when using our mobile devices: to make phone calls to our love ones, to surf the web for a gift, to do research, and to keep in contact with our peers. When we are conversing via text message, phone call, or social media then it should remain private. We should also be able to have that moment of privacy when we are online or on our mobile devices. Surveillance is an issue that affects every single person who has a digital device. Our digital footprint should be hided from the government or any one else for that matter—it is our privacy and should be protected.

The history of surveillance dates back to the implementation of the Bill of Rights—the Fourth Amendment states: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized." This amendment was passed in 1791 and it protects your privacy

from being invaded by the government. The first time that information technology was used for surveillance was during the Civil War in the form of wiretapping. From then surveillance has progress as technology has developed and the change of whom the government surveils also has progressed to its citizens. During the World War I and II governments moved to conduct surveillance on its citizens and political leaders. The Nazis used a magnetic tape device to record its citizen's conversations. Also, our government used surveillance to monitor the calls of Japanese Americans during the time of internment camps. Then our Congress held hearings concerning if the wiretapping was legal in the defense of national security. World War II marked the turning point of the importance of national security and the use of surveillance. For our generation 9/11 was the landmark event that changed policies and the scapegoating of surveilling citizens become permissible to our leaders. Now our every move is recorded by our digital footprint from the information we post ourselves to: Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, and Google. And this information is also recorded by the National Security Agency to store it in there data centers for monitoring our activities. We live in the age of data mining and where information is for profit and for control. Some of the aspects of the rise of companies like Facebook, Google, and Apple is due to the accessible of our information.

The reason why there is an importance to the surveillance of government is due to the accessible of information. The availability of our personal information with in seconds—where we have traveled to or want to travel to: what we are thinking: what we are doing: our shopping habits: our bad habits: and our health information all of this is available to our government without committing a crime. We should be aware of who

accesses our information and who is allowed to access it. Information is power over people!

Have the government crossed their limits, have they violated laws, have they created new laws to safeguard themselves, is there such a thing called privacy in the age of information technology? Sharing information with loved ones online is okay we do not have the fear of someone using it against us or to build a report on us or keeping it for their own records. The government has been in the business of data mining for sometime now and there have not been cases where it helped to stop anyone from committing a crime. I believe that our government has overstepped its boundaries. We have whistleblowers, such as Edward Snowden and William Binney who have brought to light the actions of our government. We know the programs that were created to monitor the citizens of this country with no oversight or public discussion. These programs have violated the Fourth Amendment. The points that I will cover in this research are: are the actions of the government ethical, are there any laws being broken, should the public have a say, who should be monitored, and how or can there be an oversight to these activities.

My faculty mentor for this research topic is Dr. Diana Murphy.

Dr. Murphy has years of experience in cyber-security and understands the rise of government, public, and private surveillance. She also teaches classes on cyber-security and understands the development of software and systems to monitor the activities of users. I believe she has the background to guide me and advise me as my research develops. I have spoken with Dr. Murphy in person regarding my research topic and she has agreed to work with me.

For this topic I plan to dictate time to research both sides of the argument. To finish this research I need to look at both spectrums of the argument and try to draw an academic conclusion. I will spend equal amount of time to research both angles. I will devote majority of my time on learning and gathering new information that I will help me to get a better understanding of government surveillance.

The type of data and references that I will need will be scholarly written articles and books on government surveillance. My initial strategy for collecting data and identifying relevant references is to track the leading scholars on the matter of surveillance. I will also look into the ethical issues regarding surveillance as well as the public opinion and the awareness.