Josh Stone
Week 6
Experience with Signal

At the time of this assignment, I didn't have Signal downloaded on my iPhone. However, I have briefly used it before. I had only used it for a couple of weeks to try it out with a friend. When I first downloaded it I saw that only a few of my contacts were using Signal, and at the time I didn't want to harass people into downloading yet *another* app. When I downloaded Signal again, I still didn't have many contacts on it, but this time I was going to change that.

The first thing I did was look at the privacy settings. I was familiar enough with the app to know its primary "selling" point is encryption and security. I feel like there is probably a bit more they can do on the security/privacy front, though. As far as the privacy settings, there are a few features I enjoy. I like that it allows you to turn off the preview of the app when switching between apps. I also like being able to control the notifications. For example, I have mine set to buzz when a message arrives, but not actually show a notification with any identifying information. However, the feature I like the most is the screen lock feature. I wish more apps had this. It adds an extra level of privacy to the app.

I asked a couple of my close friends and wife to download the app, none of whom had previously used Signal. I started a group chat with my friends first and noticed that I could see their contact information. I assumed it was because I had created the group, so I asked them if they were able to see each other's contact info, and they were. Again I assumed this was because they were already in each other's contacts. I then invited my wife to join the group, so now someone who wasn't already in their contacts was in the group. To my surprise everyone was able to see each other's phone numbers. I find that to be a little weird given the app's propensity for security.

I've been using the app fairly regularly since the beginning of July, and have gotten several of my friends, and my stepdaughter, to use it. Completely unrelated to the task itself, we have recently moved to a new apartment and our cell phone signal has been awful. My wife and I have new phones and can use the Wi-Fi calling feature on our phones, but my stepdaughter's phone doesn't have that feature. Using Signal was a workaround for that, as we are able to call her or text her now when she is home alone. I've used the app to make several phone calls, both on and off Wi-Fi. I didn't really notice a loss in sound quality, but when not connected to Wi-Fi there was a bit of a delay when first connecting to the call, though it wasn't a major issue.

Finally (I'm not proud to admit this) it wasn't until I was using the app for several days that I noticed the verification number/QR code. I really like that extra step, being able to compare the safety number and have that level of verification is important when using Signal for sensitive topics. Overall, I really enjoy Signal and intend to keep using it. I hope they make a few changes, especially as it relates to sharing your phone number with Signal contacts.