Kaushal Kafle

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I am a PhD student in the Department of Computer Science at the College of William and Mary, being advised by [Dr. Adwait Nadkarni](http://adwaitnadkarni.com/). My research interests lie in analyzing the security practices of modern operating systems as well as designing practical security frameworks for such systems. I work at the [Secure Platforms Lab (SPL)](https://spl-wm.github.io/) at William & Mary. My work on the security analysis of smart home platforms has been featured in [multiple news outlets](https://kaushalkafle.com/publications#press)!

**EDUCATION**

**College of William and Mary PhD in Computer Science August 2017 - Present**

***Advisor***: Dr. Adwait Nadkarni

***Relevant Courses:***

Computer and Network Security, Cybersecurity Research Analysis, Systems Security, Advanced Software Engineering, Practice of Machine Learning, Analysis of Algorithms

**Pulchowk Campus, Tribhuwan University Bachelor’s in Computer Engineering Nov 2011- Nov 2015**

**PUBLICATIONS**

**Journal Papers**

Amit Seal Ami, **Kaushal Kafle**, Kevin Moran, Adwait Nadkarni, and Denys Poshyvanyk. “Systematic Mutation-based Evaluation of the Soundness of Security-focused Android Static Analysis Techniques”. In *ACM Transactions on Security & Privacy (*[*TOPS*](https://dl.acm.org/journal/tops)*),* 2021. [[Link]](https://doi.org/10.1145/3439802)

**Kaushal Kafle**, Kevin Moran, Sunil Manandhar, Adwait Nadkarni, and Denys Poshyvanyk. “Security in Centralized Data Store-based Home Automation Platforms- A Systematic Analysis of Nest and Hue.” In *ACM Transactions on Cyber-Physical Systems (TCPS)*, 2020. [[Link]](https://doi.org/10.1145/3418286)

**Conference Papers**

Amit Seal Ami, Nathan Cooper, **Kaushal Kafle**, Kevin Moran, Denys Poshyvanyk, and Adwait Nadkarni, “Why Crypto-detectors Fail: A Systematic Evaluation of Cryptographic Misuse Detection Techniques,” in *IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (IEEE S&P)*, 2022. [[Link]](https://kaushalkafle.com/assets/pdf/ami-oakland22.pdf)

Amit Seal Ami, **Kaushal Kafle**, Kevin Moran, Adwait Nadkarni, and Denys Poshyvanyk. “Demo: Mutation-based Evaluation of Security-focused Static Analysis Tools for Android.” In *Proceedings of the 43rd IEEE/ACM International Conference on Software Engineering (ICSE’21), Formal Tool Demonstration,* May 2021, [[Link]](https://conf.researchr.org/details/icse-2021/icse-2021-Demonstrations/14/-SE-Mutation-based-Evaluation-of-Security-focused-Static-Analysis-Tools-for-Android)

Sunil Manandhar, Kevin Moran, **Kaushal Kafle**, Ruhao Tang, Denys Poshyvanyk, and Adwait Nadkarni. “Towards a Natural Perspective of Smart Homes for Practical Security and Safety Analyses.” In *Proceedings of the 41st IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (S&P*), San Francisco, CA, USA, May 2020. [[PDF]](https://kaushalkafle.com/assets/pdf/manandhar-oakland20.pdf)

**Kaushal Kafle**, Kevin Moran, Sunil Manandhar, Adwait Nadkarni, and Denys Poshyvanyk. “A Study of Data Store-based Home Automation.” In *Proceedings of the 9th ACM Conference on Data and Application Security and Privacy (CODASPY)*. Dallas, TX, USA, March 2019.***Best Paper Award*** [[PDF]](https://kaushalkafle.com/assets/pdf/kafle-codaspy19.pdf) [[press coverage]](https://kaushalkafle.com/publications#press) ****

Richard Bonett, **Kaushal Kafle**, Kevin Moran, Adwait Nadkarni, and Denys Poshyvanyk. “Discovering Flaws in Security-Focused Static Analysis Tools for Android using Systematic Mutation.” In Proceedings of the 27th USENIX Security Symposium. Baltimore, MD, USA, August 2018. [[Source code]](https://muse-security-evaluation.github.io/) [[PDF]](https://kaushalkafle.com/assets/pdf/bonett-sec18.pdf)

**Undergraduate Work**

**Kaushal Kafle**, Diwas Sharma, Aayush Subedi, and Arun Kumar Timalsina. “Improving Nepali Document Classification by Neural Network.” In Proceedings of IOE Graduate Conference (pp. 317–322), Pulchowk, Kathmandu, Nepal, 2016. [[PDF]](https://kaushalkafle.com/assets/pdf/kafle-ioegc16.pdf)

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

**Research Assistant, Department of Computer Science, William & Mary** *Jan 2018 – Present*

Over the course of my research at [SPL](https://spl-wm.github.io/), I have worked in analyzing and discovering flaws in different smart home systems (e.g., Google Nest, Philips Hue, SmartThings), security tools (e.g., Flowdroid, Amandroid) as well as third-party apps developed for smart homes or Android, employing techniques such as reverse engineering and static analysis. I have also built security frameworks that aim to protect from those flaws. My research has led to several publications in conferences and journals. Details of my work are as follows:

***Ongoing Research Projects***

* **Towards integrity of shared platform resources (*Project Lead*)**
  + A supplementary security framework for smarthome platforms to protect the integrity of their shared resources such as states shared with 3rd party apps
  + Techniques involved: *automatic collection of data from various sources, extending a real-world open-source smart home platform to implement our framework, deployment of the framework in a real-world setup*
  + *Under submission*
* **Understanding Privacy in Politics (Project Lead)**
  + *Under submission*

***Completed Research Projects****:*

* **Security of Data-Store Based Home Automation (*Project Lead)*:**
  + Analyzed security of various components of smart home platforms that facilitate automation through *reverse-engineering* or *static analysis*
  + Analyzed components included the *Cloud backend*, *smart-apps review process*, *SSL enforcement in third-party smart-apps* of the platforms.
  + Won the **Best Paper Award** in *ACM CODASPY ’19*
  + A journal extension was accepted to *ACM TCPS’20*.
  + [Press coverage](https://kaushalkafle.com/publications#press)
* **MUSE (MUtation-based Soundness Evaluation)**:
  + Designed a framework for analyzing *soundness claims* of Android static analysis tools leveraging concepts from mutation testing
  + Discovered undisclosed flaws in multiple prominent Android static analysis security tools
  + *USENIX ‘18*
  + A journal extension was accepted to *ACM TOPS’21*.
* **Helion (Home automation security EvaLuatION)**:
  + *Conducted a user study* to collect and understand smart home routines from real users.
  + *Designed representation of user-driven routines* gathered from user-study to be used for natural language processing
  + *Created safety and security policies* by analyzing automation sequences generated from a user’s automation preferences
  + *IEEE S&P ‘20*

**Teaching Assistant, Department of Computer Science, William & Mary** *Aug 2017 – May 2019*

*Taught labs and graded assignments for the following classes:*

* Computational Problem Solving (CSCI 141), Fall 2017 – *133 Students*
* Programming for Data Science (CSCI 140), Spring 2019 – *93 Students*

*Graded assignments for the following classes:*

* Mobile App Security (CSCI 520), Spring 2018 – *20 Students*
* Mobile App Security (CSCI 520), Fall 2018 – *12 Students*

**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS & INVITED TALKS**

* **Guest Lecture in Mobile Application Security (CSCI 445)** *Oct 7th, 2021*
  + Ramifications of SSL issues in mobile apps for the smart home
  + William & Mary**,** Williamsburg, VA
* **Guest Lecture in IoT Security and Safety (CSCI 680)** *Feb 7th, 2021*
  + **“**Securing a Smart home**”**
  + William & Mary**,** Williamsburg, VA
* **Journal Club** - William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA *Sep 26th, 2019*
  + “The Security of Smart Home Platforms”
* **9th ACM CODASPY** – Dallas, TX *Mar 25th, 2019*
  + “A Study of Data-store Based Home Automation”
* **18th Graduate Research Symposium ­**– William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA *Mar 15th, 2019*
  + “A Study of Data-store Based Home Automation”
* **USENIX’18** – Baltimore, MD *Aug 17th, 2018*
  + “Discovering Flaws in Security-Focused Static Analysis Tools for Android using Systematic Mutation”

**AWARDS & HONORS**

* **GSAB Research Grant,** William & Mary - Fall 2021
* **International Student Opportunity Award,** William & Mary - Spring 2020, Spring 2021
* **Best Paper Award**, ACM CODASPY, Dallas, TX, USA - March 2019
* **USENIX Security Symposium** **Travel Award** - 2018

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

* **Reviewer for Conferences**
  + USENIX Artifact Evaluation Committee 2021, 2022
* **Sub-reviewer for Conferences**
  + NDSS - 2020, 2021, 2022
  + Annual Computer Security Applications Conference (ACSAC) - 2022
  + USENIX Security Symposium (USENIX) - 2019, 2021
  + The International Conference on Information Systems Security (ICISS) - 2019

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

* Invited to participate in *Which? Investigates* podcast on smart home security ([Link](https://play.acast.com/s/which-investigates/howhackableisyourhome-)), Oct 2021
* My work featured in various news outlets ([Links here](https://kaushalkafle.com/publications#press))
* One of the founding members of Secure Platforms Lab at William & Mary ([Lab website](https://spl-wm.github.io/))
* Volunteer, IOE Graduate Conference, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, Nepal 2015
* Volunteer, Latex Workshop at IOE Graduate Conference, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, Nepal 2015
* Organizer, Hackathon, Locus 2015
* Organizer, Yomari Codecamp, Locus 2015

**REFERENCES**

* *Dr. Adwait Nadkarni (PhD Advisor)*  
  Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science  
  College of William and Mary, VA, USA  
  Contact: [apnadkarni@wm.edu](mailto:apnadkarni@wm.edu)
* *Dr. Trent Jaeger*  
  Professor, Department of Computer Science  
  Pennsylvania State University, PA, USA  
  Contact: [trj1@psu.edu](mailto:trj1@psu.edu)
* *Dr. Denys Poshyvanyk*Professor, Department of Computer Science  
  College of William and Mary, VA, USA  
  Contact: [denys@cs.wm.edu](mailto:denys@cs.wm.edu)
* *Dr. Kevin Moran*  
  Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science  
  George Mason University, VA, USA  
  Contact: [kpmoran@gmu.edu](mailto:kpmoran@gmu.edu)