Stephen Wagstaff
INFOST 410 - Final Exam
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1. What are the most interesting examples of the big data usage you learned from the lectures and readings.

I thought the opening examples of the lecture were the most interesting, in particular the example of the brokerage firm tracking their traders drinking and habits outside of work. While I view this as a clear invasion of privacy and very unethical it is still very interesting. Is it fair for an employee to be able to hide their drinking or habits that could be detrimental to their work from the employer? After all the did the employer not hire the employee under the assumption that they would continue to perform to the best of their ability, yet if they form these bad habits and it can be shown that they have a negative effect on their work then is it fair to the employer? I think an employer does have more power over an employee than anyone else in a person's life so an data surveillance coming from this I view as a very slippery slope.

2. What are your thoughts on data surveillance?

I think data surveillance is very dangerous, but it is a necessary tool. I think the most important aspect to focus on a scrutinize is the algorithms behind the data collection, and this was a point that was discussed in the Q&A portion of the lecture. Big data and data surveillance has so much good to offer in terms of increasing consumer satisfaction by looking at buying trends, or aiding users in a simple bettering search result. The big risk is the type or fields of data being collected, that is any data that links the overall data back of a user or real person. I think the safest way to allow data surveillance to improve the overall user experience is to keep data collection anonymous but unfortunately this does require companies to have more transparent collection policies and more transparent algorithms.

3. Did you have personal experiences with data surveillance?

I make my best effort to only allow data collection that is anonymous, and this is obviously impossible so I don't stress about it too much. But I do allow my health insurance company to collect my workout activities. This is because they offer a discount for the collection of this data. I'm an avid cyclist so I do also upload all of my workout/ride data to a public site (Strava), and while I do this to keep track of them for my own purposes but it also uses my data to create popular routes and rate what roads are more bicycle friendly base on how many people use sections of road.