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My Concepts of Privacy
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Personal Concepts of Privacy

I have a very evolving definition of privacy, which is due to the continuously changing nature of the society and world that we live in. That might seem strange, how can I have an evolving definition of something that certainly has legal consequences and laws associated with it? Well, this is a story of my path of privacy. Prior to the creation of Wikileaks and the feats of Edward Snowden- I thought little about privacy. Let's walk through it.

Growing up, I was an only child and did not have the issue of sharing clothing, toys, etc with siblings. Privacy was just something I had automatically in regards to my own belongings because I simply asked for them from my parents and received what they were able to provide. I didn't have to chronolog where I went once I was older and able to leave the house to visit friends. In fact, as a kid in elementary school I frequently visited my elderly neighbor who helped me with homework and shared her vocabulary through a thesaurus. As I was born in 1991, my early childhood was not something that could be captured and easily shared across the country. We didn't have cell phones, personal computers were not available to my family, and all school work was done on paper. There was little reason to think about privacy.

My family is a military family, although my dad was retired by the time I was born. But by nature of the connection, we did many things that related to the military like use the base for hospitals and shopping. A military base hospital is somewhat like Kaiser, except you don't really have the same doctor because they are always getting deployed or transferred. So some of the situations where normally there would be privacy would not matter, since you'd constantly be rotating through doctors and they all needed information that they might not already have through records. I got used to re-explaining things that were meant to be a bit more private.

In middle school and high school is when technology really started to kick off in regards to human communication. In middle school is when nokia brick phones came out and I was able to get one. I hardly remember texting being a thing that the phone could do until I reached high school. There was also little interest in sharing with people in a wider circle than you regularly associated with in person. I started high school in 2005 and I vaguely remember MySpace being a thing and concerning myself with who should be in my Top 8. I wrote poetry in a notebook which I later converted into a web page so I didn't have to worry about the ink smudging. I didn't concern myself with what if someone saw my poetry and it became some sort of an ordeal. If I did, it was in the back of my mind.

During this time, I also made a couple of friends who I only knew over the internet. I had my regular friends in person as well, but between middle school and during high school I made friends with four other pre-teen/teenagers online from various places across the country. We talked online through forums and used our imaginations to collective 'write' a story together about 4 super hero-ed teens influenced by our readings from the time period. This was on a public forum and privacy was never a concern. We even wrote each other as pen pals- physical mail to each other's address. My parents knew about my friends, it was never a secret, and never a concern. I also am still friends with those four adults, although we still have not met in person. I still thought little about privacy.

There was the wave of Facebook & YouTube, the advent of the iPhone and Android smart phones, the ability for families to have personal computers and all of this did not concern me in regards to privacy. I was, and mostly still am, of the regard that if it can make my life better than I am alright with exchanging privacy for convenience. As an example, in my current apartment I have multiple smart phone devices: an Amazon Echo and Dot, two Google homes, and multiple sensors, light bulbs, and plugs connected to Smart Things. Technically someone

could hack into these devices somehow and get data about how people come and go from my house, or recordings of things I ask my robot personal assistants but I take that chance by owning those products. I joke with my friends that “I welcome my Google overlords” as long as it makes my life simpler.

So what does all of this have to do with my views of privacy? Well, I have lived a life that privacy was not something I ever thought about because I either innately had it or seemed fine with sacrificing some of it. The first time I really began to take a look at how I, and others, should perceive privacy was through others use of social media and what the general media seemed to talk about. I realized that a lot of things that teens and young adults have to deal with and grow through nowadays is things that can be possibly recorded and used against them in a much wider audience and circumstance than ever before. In a few decades, I'd be surprised if we found anyone we thought was suitable for public office after the slew of their life recordings were available. That mistakes or minor issues that students have are being blown into viral images or videos circulating across the web of strangers who know nothing about that person. I started to think a little about privacy.

So I've changed my Facebook credentials to make sure my professional and private life are separate. I only post work related things on Twitter or LinkedIn and keep minimal my exact identity on sites where it's easy to. But that's minor in the grand scheme of privacy and I hadn't thought much about it on a legal level. Then came the creation of Wikileaks and the debacle with Edward Snowden. At the beginning, I was very confused, coming from a military household on why anyone in the government would work so hard at it's own destruction. I thought everything he did was illegal and that it was a crazy situation. Then I looked more into it and thought about all the emerging issues with the NSA spying being broadcasted. ‘Well, what do people have to worry about spying on domestic citizens if they have nothing to hide?’, I naively

thought. It took a lot of time and research and alternative opinion discussions for me to think about the issues of government overreach, why privacy is a right, and why you don't need something to hide to want your own privacy. So now I had a lot to think about when it came to privacy.

Over time, I've settled into the overarching idea that if a person wants to sacrifice some of their privacy for convenience, like I do, then that is their prerogative but it does not mean others should be forced to make the same decisions. I believe that information regarding a person's identity should be kept confidential and that it's rightfully illegal to hack, steal, and/or distribute these sorts of key private details. I've decided that during some high stress times it makes sense for privacy to be restricted a little, like the airport restrictions post 9-11, but that it should not be taken as a given or nonchalantly. I'd say that I've thought a lot about privacy.

Governments should not spy on their people and break privacy in the name of potentially finding criminal activity- there's other more specific departments whose job that is to look for criminals in less broad forms and legal methods. It makes sense for people to be able to obtain the level of privacy, even secrecy of their own information, that they desire as long as it's within the guidelines of the law. I think it's fair to say now that privacy shouldn't be an afterthought.