

Assignment 5: paper proposal

Assignment:

If you are taking the class for credit, this is a proposal for the final paper. What aspect of identity are you going to write about? What are the questions you are addressing? Why is this an interesting area? What approach will you take?

Conceptual response:

I'm interested in looking at the convergence of identity and privacy in a digital age. How does data about you construct your identity? Who owns this data? Who has access to it? Who should? What are the implications for an individual who doesn't have control over his information? What are the implications for marginalized individuals? Does external control of identity information create homogenization of people? How do digital design decisions affect an individual's ability to control his identity as desired?

Recently, technology offers governments and businesses the ability to store and access large quantities of information about people. Sometimes this data is used to do targeted advertising; sometimes it is stored to ease individual's digital lives. Regardless, the data has the potential to create an entirely different society, where people can be labeled and prioritized by various institutions for both economic and political reasons. Although thought of as a convenience, these technologies have the power to radically change how individuals present themselves both digitally and physically by creating social values that can be easily enforced. Rather than being freeing, technology has the potential to be tremendously constraining.

Given these negative possibilities, how then can we affect technology to be more empowering for the individual? What must we be aware of in order to control for the negative possibilities?

This paper will consist of a segment of my thesis, presenting an overview of the fears, the concerns and the philosophy behind what control individuals should and shouldn't have over their identity information.