Privacy Activity

Data are everywhere. You are 'giving off data' and providing data to others all the time. Sometimes this data can be directly linked to you as an individual; sometimes not.

Read the scenario assigned to you. (Many of these are based on real stories.)

A. A boss sees an employee who called in "sick" in a picture that someone posted on Facebook. In this picture the employee is partying the night before. The boss fires the employee.

B. A company who has contracts with the Federal Government doesn't want to hire you because a Facebook friend leaves lots of enthusiastic "legalize marijuana" postings on your wall.

C. A teacher is fired because there's a picture of this teacher holding alcoholic drinks on her MySpace page.

D. Someone's Netflix rental history is being used as evidence in a murder case because this person rented a lot of horror movies.

E. An 18-year-old boy is charged with distributing child pornography when he uses his cell phone to send naked images of his 17-year-old ex-girlfriend to his friends.

Prepare a 3-5 minute presentation for the class that includes answers to the following:

1. Names of everyone in your group

2. The scenario you were assigned

3. In your scenario, did the people have the right to use the information they did or should it have been private? Why?

4. Are the people who were affected by the use of this information at fault? Why?

5. Give another example of something unexpected happening because of information shared at sites such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs.

6. Think about what data you've made available in different places/spaces such as Facebook, Twitter, texting, Netflix, email, at the grocery store, etc. What might other people think about who you are based on these data? Is it an accurate impression of who you are?

7. Consider each of the following broad categories of societal change:

   - Privacy
   - Safety
   - Globalization
   - Connectivity (keeping in touch with people)
   - Permanence of historical information

   Discuss whether availability of data has had a positive or negative impact on each aspect of society and, if negative, how these consequences can be minimized.