

Globalization of Personal Data Project – International Survey
Concept Paper*

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Guarantees of privacy, that is, rules as to who may and who may not observe or reveal information about whom, must be established in any stable social system. If these assurances do not prevail – if there is normlessness with respect to privacy – every withdrawal from visibility may be accompanied by a measure of espionage, for without rules to the contrary persons are naturally given to intrude upon invisibility (Barry Schwartz, “The Sociology of Privacy,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 73, 1968)

Why Study Public Opinion?

It is customary to think of public opinion as indispensable to the legislative process in a democracy. While not denying the importance of public opinion for governance, it is equally important to be cognizant of the processes that shape and mold public opinion, and the extent to which public opinion truly reflects informed choice. In a recent article, Oscar Gandy (2003) makes the point that at times public opinion surveys about privacy have been driven by corporate and special interests, whose framing of the questions (with the aid of academics and privacy experts) have depicted a concerned but fragmented public that is willing to trade privacy for utilitarian benefits. From a policy angle, he argues, public opinion surveys about privacy have played an important role in framing the debate among policy makers. As I will show below, Roger Clarke (in Davison et al., 2003), another key researcher on privacy, concurs with this assessment.

Although this observation has been made with regard to public opinion research in general (Osborne and Rose 1999), it assumes special significance at times of national debates, such as those accompanying the widespread use of surveillance technology following the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September, 2001.

I will have more to say about the methodological and conceptual hurdles encountered in attitudinal studies of privacy. It suffices at this point to underscore the need to pay attention to context and design of the questionnaires, especially concerning individually and politically sensitive topics.

For example, consider a Canadian poll that was carried out by COMPAS in behalf of the National Post, and found its way to the deliberations of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in Parliament that was in the process of assessing the

*This is part one of a two-part paper on public opinion and privacy. The purpose of part one is to outline the conceptual and methodological issues related to the study of cross-national public opinion and attitudes to privacy. I conclude the paper with a series of questions, which will be operationalized and amended as a result of the workshop discussion. This will be for the benefit of questionnaire design, question wording, and item selection. Part two of the paper, that is near completion, surveys public opinion research dealing with privacy, both at the national and international levels. It summarizes key sources from commercial, private and academic organizations, as well key findings that are relevant to our concern in the field survey.

adoption of national ID card. The survey asked, “Do you see the terrorist threat from Islamic extremists as more serious than most threats,” and “Should people in Canada who are accused of being terrorists have the same rights as accused criminals?” The Committee saw the contaminating effect of these loaded questions on subsequent answers and dismissed the survey because it “raised doubt about the usefulness of the response” (Canada 2003).

Consider another survey, this time carried out by EKOS in behalf of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). EKOS is an experienced polling organization that has pioneered the study of privacy issues in Canada. Its survey *Privacy Revealed* (1993) was one of the early, detailed explorations of public attitudes to privacy in Canada. A year ago, it was commissioned by CIC to carry out a national survey that dealt with biometrics and the receptivity of Canadians to adopting ID cards in light of privacy concerns. The findings were presented at a high profile conference on biometrics and national ID cards that was held in Ottawa last October under the sponsorship of CIC.

In examining the order of questions, the EKOS survey unwittingly tapped in the mind of the public an implicit association between immigrants and terrorism, even though national data in Canada show that immigrants have substantially lower crime rates than native-born Canadians. For example, the lead question in the survey asked if respondents thought there were “too many immigrants” in Canada, to which one-third answered in the affirmative. From there the survey proceeded to ask a battery of questions on terrorism, biometrics and national ID card. Although a minority of Canadians (around 12%) thought that Canada would be exposed to a terrorist attack, and fewer (2.5%) thought that they personally would be affected, around 45 per cent agreed with the statement that “there is a serious problem with groups supporting terrorist activity in Canada,” and 61 per cent agreed to the statement that “given the potential of terrorism, the Government of Canada should be given special (extraordinary – parentheses in original) powers to deal with possible terrorism-related offences.”

The upshot of this is that most Canadians are willing to sacrifice privacy through the use of biometrics for the sake of security, even though as the survey discovered only a minority (15%) of respondents knew what biometrics meant. The finding regarding the relationship between privacy, security and terrorism is not unique to Canada, but is found in numerous surveys in the United States, Britain, and other European countries.

Some participants (I among them) at the CIC conference raised certain methodological concerns about the EKOS survey. Here is the official reporting of these concerns and EKOS’s response as they appeared in the proceedings of the conference:

In the discussion, some of the participants expressed concerns about the study and its methodology, slanting a methodological slant towards security, the use of biometrics and the impacts on terrorism. They suggested that perhaps technology is not the only solution. Mr. Graves [President of EKOS] responded to these concerns by agreeing with the caveat about the overuse of a technology as a solution. Indeed, he stated that when Canadians were asked how Canada should deal with terrorism in the long run, the top two choices were better forms of intelligence and

developing a more multi-cultural and tolerant society (Public Policy Forum, 2003: 26).

Why Privacy?

As was made clear in the opening quotation from Barry Schwartz's essay, privacy serves to stabilize the social system. But privacy serves personal ends as well. In seeking an answer to the question "why privacy?" Lucas Introna invokes ontological and existential arguments. Not only does privacy define the "context" in which people interact, it is also linked to intimacy by providing "moral capital" for sustaining human relationships. Borrowing from Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Introna locates the possibilities of enactment and management of social roles in "our ability to control who has access to us, and who knows what about us" (1997: 267). This is why many writers consider privacy as a requisite to autonomy for "without privacy there would be no self" (Introna, 1997: 269).

In a highly individualistic society such as ours, privacy is linked to individual rights, at times at the expense of collective and communitarian rights. As argued by Amitai Etzion (1999), the exercise of privacy has to be weighed against societal needs and the common good. This is why privacy can never be absolute.

Originally, the study of privacy was linked to urbanization and the emergence of mass society. With the flourishing of modernity the desire for privacy was pursued at the expense of participation in collective life. Richard Sennett (1977) and Christopher Lasch (1995) lamented the decline of public life and its transformation into a privatized form that reflected preoccupation with the self at the expense of involvement in public affairs. Here privacy is conceived in an individuated fashion, and is reflective of alienation and seclusion from public life. This latter theme appears in David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), Vance Packard's *A Nation of Strangers* (1974), and more recently in Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000). It was the philosopher Hannah Arendt who, close to half-century ago, warned against "the cult of privacy [that] rests on an individualist conception of society" (1959: 70).

The task facing policy makers is how to balance individual needs for privacy against society's requirements, bearing in mind, as Charles Raab (1999) points out, that the "balancing process" is fraught with problems. It is difficult to establish a "level playing field" in which privacy values are able to counter legislative and bureaucratic attempts at limiting the introduction of privacy protection measures. What is needed, he argues, is a multifaceted approach to privacy protection that relies on "regulation and self-regulations," and aims at educating the public, and making use of privacy enhancing technologies. Priscilla Regan (2003) argues forcefully that privacy is not only an individual attribute, but also a common good on three counts: privacy is a "common value" to which each of us subscribes in varying degrees; privacy is a "public value" since it is a requirement for democratic practices at the political system level; and privacy is increasingly acquiring a "collective value" due to the pervasive influence of technology on the community as a whole.

Thus privacy is a means to an end; at the socio-cultural and psychological level it is the means for self-realization and ontological autonomy. At the political level, privacy is promoted as an antidote to state interference. In referring to the classic work of Alan Westin, Margulis (2003) cites four functions of personal privacy. It provides for:

- (a) personal autonomy and the desire to avoid being manipulated;
- (b) emotional release and management of psychological and physical stress;
- (c) self-evaluation which refers to one's need to integrate experience meaningfully; and
- (d) a certain amount of protection to communication, which in turn defines interpersonal boundaries and for sharing information with others whom we trust.

What is Privacy?

There is no consensus on the precise definition of privacy; as analyzed by Solove (in Taipale 2003), the literature on privacy seems to cluster around the following six dimensions: (a) the right to be let alone; (b) limited access to the self; (c) secrecy; (d) control of personal information; (e) personhood; and (f) intimacy. This definition extends the original four-way definition (solitude, intimacy, anonymity and reserve) provided by Alan Westin who says,

Viewed in terms of the relation of the individual to social participation, privacy is the voluntary and temporary withdrawal of a person from the general society through physical or psychological means, whether in a state of solitude or small-group intimacy or, when among larger groups, in a condition of anonymity or reserve. The individual's desire for privacy is never absolute, since participation in society is an equally powerful desire. Thus each individual is continually engaged in a personal adjustment process in which he balances the desire for privacy with the desire for disclosure and communication of himself to others, in light of the environmental conditions and societal norms set by the society in which he lives. The individual does so in the face of pressures from the curiosity of others and from the process of surveillance that every society sets in order to enhance its societal norms. (1967: 7).

As remarked by Giddens, privacy has two aspects to it: "privacy as the 'other side' of the penetration of the state, and privacy as what may not be revealed" (1991: 153). Goffman's exploration of privacy, it can be said, belongs to the second aspect of Giddens's definition. The first is connected with modernity and the rise of the nation-state and civil society. Although civil society provided protection against encroachment by the state on the private domain, the state and civil society continue to exist in a state of tension, particularly in times of national crises such as the events of 11 September, 2001. Westin (2003) seems to be in agreement with Giddens. For Westin, privacy ought to be considered at the political and the socio-cultural/organizational spheres.

Privacy with Regard to What?

Privacy violation, Gary Marx (2001) argues, implies transgressing **four borders**: natural borders, social borders, spatial and/or temporal borders, and ephemeral or transitory borders. This is akin to the definition provided by Robert Smith, editor of the *Privacy Journal*, who sees privacy as "the desire by each of us for physical space where we can be free of interruption, intrusion, embarrassment, or accountability and the attempt to control the time and manner of disclosures of

personal information about ourselves.” (cited in Privacy and Human Rights 2003). These, in turn, are equivalent to the four dimensions of privacy that are listed in the annual report *Privacy and Human Rights 2003. An International Survey of Privacy Laws and Developments* (Privacy International and Electronic Privacy Information Center, 2003). According to the report, the study of privacy encompasses **information privacy, bodily privacy, privacy of communication, and territorial privacy**. Although these are different facets of privacy and involve separate methods of data collection, they all can be cross-referenced through the convergence of information and communication technologies to construct profiles of people. Thus through data mining technique, bodily, territorial, informational and communicational data can be converted and merged to construct a digitized individual (See also Caryn Mladen, “Privacy in Canada,” in *International Report on Privacy for Electronic Government*, report funded by the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications of Japan, 2003, pp. 253-314, available at www.joi.ito.com/joiwiki/PrivacyReport). Whether practiced by the private or public sector, this merging of data is the basis for social profiling which is considered by some to constitute privacy violation on two counts. First, personal information that was collected for one purpose is being used for another; second, data are merged from various sources to construct or infer behavioral patterns of subjects.

At What Level to Study Privacy?

There is agreement among analysts that privacy consideration can take place at any of the following levels:

- Individual (as in everyday encounters);
- Group membership (as in medical research or in ethnic, national and racial profiling);
- Organizational (as members of organizations and workplaces);
- Global (as in transborder flows of personally identifiable information).

Whose Privacy?

As delineated in our SSHRC proposal, our concern in this project is with four different actors, although the same individuals may simultaneously occupy one or more of the following roles:

- (a) Citizens;
- (b) Travelers;
- (c) Workers/employees;
- (d) Consumers.

What to Look for in the Study of Privacy?

Margulis makes the point that although secrecy and privacy differ in certain respects, both revolve around controlling access and processes (of how information, possessions and space are managed), and as types (of privacy), and as functions (of privacy). The main difference between secrecy and privacy is that the management of the former is invested with greater emotional and cognitive efforts than privacy is. Secrecy is propelled by intentions to keep certain individuals, groups and organizations from penetrating the boundaries of the self. Our interest is in the study of privacy, and not secrecy.

Current, empirical and legal study of privacy has expanded significantly to include knowledge about (a) **awareness** of existing technological, legislative, and organizational means in the private and public sectors to protect/enhance privacy, as well as to include/exclude individuals; (b) **reaction** to and **experience** with specific privacy protection measures; (c) impact of so-called **big events** on privacy issues; (d) increasing articulation of privacy and **national security**, at times at the expense of privacy; (e) attempts at **harmonization** of national, regional, and international standards of privacy; and (f) the **importance** of privacy for commerce and individual users of electronic communication and transactions.

The globalization of commerce, travel and communication has also meant the globalization of privacy. Beyond comparative analysis of privacy legislations in various countries, which is not our concern in this portion of the project (see Bennett and Raab, 2003), there is a dearth of systematic information that deals with cross-national attitudes to privacy. Not only that such a comparative approach is prohibitive in terms of cost, but that the methodological and conceptual issues involved in researching cross-national attitudes to privacy are substantial. It is hoped that this project will throw some light on this matter.

Why Conduct Cross-National Studies?

A few years ago, Colin Bennett remarked that “the lack of reliable cross-national data on citizen attitudes toward privacy would suggest a pressing need to commission surveys that allow more comprehensive and reliable inferences to be drawn. There is surely an unjustifiable imbalance in the survey data currently available” (1996:17). It is still the case that survey research on privacy is most developed in North America - the United States in particular. However, we have seen constant expansion of privacy studies covering various facets and countries (which are mostly western). In large measure this increase has been due to the promotion of human rights, good governance and the establishment of privacy ombudsman offices in several countries. More significantly though, it is the spread of globalization that has spurred cross-national interest in privacy. First, state reactions to terrorism have been accompanied with national legislations to counter terrorist activities. These political initiatives triggered reactions from the public and privacy advocacy groups who saw in excessive government intrusion ominous threat to privacy protection. As will be shown in Appendix B of this study, recent public opinion surveys examining citizen attitudes to anti-terrorism legislation focused on privacy in the context of national security. Second, globalization is largely facilitated by the electronic flow of information across international borders. The sheer magnitude of transmission of financial and personal data has led to calls for developing proper means to safeguard informational privacy. Third, several public opinion surveys that dealt with the spread of electronic commerce have concluded that adequate privacy protection of personal data is a basic requirement mentioned by consumers for successful e-commerce, although Europeans more than Americans tend to leave it to government rather than business to regulate citizen privacy. In a world that is becoming increasingly connected, privacy ceases to be the exclusive concern of individuals and indeed single governments, and becomes also the global concern of regional and international organizations (the European Union and OECD, for example).

How to Study Attitudes to Privacy

In his stocktaking of privacy legislations and public opinion surveys, Colin Bennett (1996) was able to locate public opinion surveys with varying frequencies in Australia, Hong Kong, Hungary, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and West Germany. Bennett confined his search to items dealing with **informational** privacy and excluded so-called “single privacy” issues, such as people’s feeling about the invasiveness of census questions, introduction of ID cards, and direct marketing. Our focus in this study extends beyond informational privacy to include territorial, communicational, and body or physical privacy. As well, we are concerned with what consumers think of direct marketing/profiling and its implications for privacy, and the use of surveillance technologies (such as CCTV) in public places. Bennett supplemented his public opinion surveys with an inventory of privacy legislations in 25 other countries, the overwhelming majority of which were Western.

While the bulk of existing surveys uses traditional telephone and to a lesser extent face-to-face interviews that are based on national samples, because of the widespread interest in privacy, there is a discernible increase in adopting a combination of methodologies (see MORI 2003). As well, web sites themselves have become research site, permitting content analysis of their privacy seals (LaRose and Rifon, 2003). These various methodologies can be summarized as follows:

- (a) **Qualitative** studies: usually comprised of small samples, such as focus groups. In many of these cases, qualitative studies are used to pilot test and develop questions for use in quantitative surveys. Qualitative studies are also used in a follow-up manner to examine policy implications emanating from quantitative results.
- (b) **Small scale quantitative** studies where the setting is an organization: Academics interested in issues pertaining to employee and customer attitudes to privacy have made important contributions to developing privacy scales and indices that are based on small samples.
- (c) **Large scale quantitative** studies: The bulk of large scale privacy surveys are quantitative in nature, and they tend to be national in scope. In most cases, such surveys are conducted by public opinion firms, some of which operate internationally. Unless commissioned for specific purposes, these omnibus surveys tend to react to salient issues of the day. In the case of recurring issues of public concern (and privacy is such an issue) similar questions appear over time in omnibus surveys. Several polling organizations, particularly those affiliated with academic institutions, make data sets containing longitudinal privacy items available for secondary analysis.
- (d) The **web** as a basis for drawing samples of consumers and administering surveys: interest in the internet has spilled over into the methodological domain. Most public opinion firms carry out so-called interactive or on-line polling by tapping into internet users to study privacy attitudes, whether for marketing, political campaigning, or in the study of social movements. The advantage of web-based sampling is the speed with which questionnaires are answered and their cost-effectiveness compared to other form of surveys. The disadvantage in using the

web for opinion surveys is the inherent bias of the samples. Web respondents tend to be educated, more males than females, urban, and frequent users of the web.

- (e) The **world wide web** has also been used as a source to study privacy policies of web sites. The sampling of web sites for the purpose of content analysis of privacy statements has become a major undertaking in consumer and privacy studies (see Appendix A).

Operationalization of Privacy

The systematic study of privacy spans at least four decades of empirical research. In the process of carrying out such research, various attempts were made to develop operational concepts of privacy. It may be argued that the pioneering work of Alan Westin, in association with several public opinion firms in the United States, has furthered the study of privacy more than research conducted by anyone else. Oscar Gandy's earlier comment (aimed in part at Westin's work) concerning the danger that these surveys will be used to confer legitimacy on political and corporate agendas in the pursuit of influencing the on-going privacy debate makes it all the more important to pay close attention to the types of questions used by pollsters when assessing public reaction to privacy issues, and the context in which these questions are asked. A main theme that runs through public opinion data operationalizes the concept of privacy along the following lines:

- (A) Westin's dimensions of privacy regarding personal lives:
 - (a) Privacy as **Solitude**: to be "free from observation by others";
 - (b) Privacy as **Intimacy**: "small group seclusion for members to achieve a close, relaxed and frank relationship;
 - (c) Privacy as **Anonymity**: to enjoy "freedom from identification and from surveillance in public places and public acts";
 - (d) Privacy as **Reserve**: the "desire to limit disclosure to others; it requires others to recognize and respect that desire." (Margulis, 2003: 412).

As I will demonstrate in Appendix A, public opinion surveys have operationalized these and other privacy components so as to give us a longitudinal view of attitudes to privacy.

- (B) Assessment of threat to privacy comes from various sources:
 - (a) Law enforcement agencies;
 - (b) Other government agencies (use of ID cards; CCTV, biometrics)
 - (c) On-line business transactions;
 - (d) Off-line business transactions;
 - (e) Health care system;
 - (f) Educational institutions;
 - (g) Employers;
 - (h) Marketers.

- (C) Ranking of personal data (financial, health, etc.) in terms of sensitivity.

(D) Westin's classification of "ideological positions" of consumers regarding informational privacy has resulted in a three-way typology:

- (a) Fundamentalists;
- (b) Pragmatists;
- (c) Unconcerned.

(E) Citizen awareness regarding data protection measures;

(F) Experience with attempts to secure information about one's self.

What Problems to Expect when Carrying out Cross-National Privacy Surveys?

The pitfalls in carrying out global research on privacy were highlighted by an international panel on *Information Privacy in a Globally Networked Society: Implications for Information Systems Research* (Davison et al. 2003). The problems spanned the following areas:

“quality challenges in attitudinal surveys in general:

- measurement bias and response bias
- non-response bias
- proxy sampling frames
- unjustified assumptions about Likert scales

quality challenges in privacy-related research in particular:

- non-response levels and biases
- situational relativities
- cultural relativities
- rigour versus relevance to strategy and policy”

Challenges of a general nature should be familiar to students of survey research. Questions of reliability and validity of the items in a cross-national research are important in controlling for measurement bias. Sensitivity of the topic and phrasing of questions are crucial here. How does one get honest responses from participants in a survey, if they feel that their answers might compromise them? This is crucial in societies where the respondents are not accustomed to revealing intimate data about themselves, such as East European countries. Non-response bias due to non-randomness of those who do not respond may lead to biased samples that are different from the population composition originally envisaged in the sample design. Also, bias can be generated with non-response to certain questions in the survey.

For the sake of convenience and/or cost, researchers sometime choose proxy samples to carry out their research, assuming that they are representative of the population. The Likert scale problematic is a familiar one. How does one insure that the ordinal scales used in questionnaire items are actually ranked meaningfully in an equidistant fashion cross-culturally? One should also keep in mind that Likert scales are not generally used in qualitative data.

Quality challenges that are specific to privacy-related surveys must consider privacy as an intervening or confounding variable. A low response rate can in itself be an indicator of people's privacy concerns. Can one assume that attitudes to privacy among those who answer the questionnaire are similar to those who did not respond, even if it is the case that the latter's refusal is due in part at least to placing high value on privacy? Because privacy means different things to different people and spans several domains, it is important that respondents be told by the interviewer the context of their attitudes to privacy that are being sought after. For example, Roger Clarke suggests that researchers should distinguish between behavioural privacy, privacy of the person, communicational privacy, and privacy of personal data. In addition to cultural relativism which weighs heavily in cross-national investigations of privacy, Clarke makes a connection between the media and its influence on public attitudes towards privacy, a point that was raised above by Gandy. According to Clarke,

Media reports (which for the most part reflect propaganda, public relations campaigns and controlled information flows from governments, government agencies, and corporations – parentheses in original) are likely to condition responses during the days and weeks that follow their publication. An extreme case of this bias is evident in the enormous politicization of privacy-related matters in the U.S.A., the U.K., and a few other countries following the assault on civil rights unleashed since 12 September 2001, and justified as responses to the terrorist assaults on New York and Washington D.C. the previous day (in Davison et. al, 2003: 345).

Another, equally useful study of cross-national research is written by the president of MORI, Robert Worcester, in collaboration with Marta Lagos and Miguel Basanez (Problems and Progress in Cross-National Studies: Lessons Learned the Hard Way, 2000, available at www.mori.com). The paper is very useful because it is written by individuals who have substantial experience in carrying out international surveys. The paper talks to nitty-gritty problems faced in cross-cultural research of public opinion. The authors highlight the problems encountered in drawing up representative samples in regions where reliable frames for population count (such as census) are not available, where within country population heterogeneity (such as in Brazil) poses sampling problems, and where the problems of language and questionnaire translations across cultures are serious problems. Here the problem of meaning and lack of language equivalence across cultures becomes challenging. In our case, for example, to what extent is the word privacy salient in East European countries and Mexico, compared to Canada and United states? Does privacy mean the same thing to people from different cultures? The authors suggest using reverse translation, i.e., telling what the word privacy means in so many words as to make sure that the researcher is tapping equivalent meaning, even though the word as such is not part of the vocabulary of the country. Here is how the authors put it:

In those cases [cross-cultural contexts] the word is translated into a phrase, and has to be analyzed as such. Back translations of questionnaires is a fundamental part of multinational, multilingual studies; many mistakes are made when this is not done, even when working in the same language...(p. 8)

Two additional problems are raised by the authors, and it is useful to mention them: one, concerns the use of semantic differential scales, and the other refers to the assumptions of cross-cultural comparability of socio-demographic indicators. We have alluded to the first problem earlier, but the authors add an interesting dimension to the relationship between culture and placement on a Likert-type scale. They note that in Latin America, it is culturally more comfortable for people to take a middle position so that they do not appear to be partisan. Thus a four-point scale produces higher non-response rates than a scale with uneven choices. It is also the case, however, that some would prefer a mid-point on the scale so as to “hide” one’s true location. With regard to socio-demographic indicators, the problem raised by cross-cultural research is best illustrated when comparing cross-nationally income, education and occupational data. In many societies ranking data on income is problematic. Is a middle-income position in one country equivalent to a similar position in another country? What about those countries with thriving informal economies? How does one account for income distribution? Similarly, when ranking people by educational level, can one assume that the quality of education is comparable cross-nationally? In societies undergoing extensive political and economic transitions, such as East European and certain developing countries, the meaning of socio-demographic differentiation and ranking changes quickly across time. This change is also evident in regions within one country.

What Questions to Ask?

In the conclusion to his stocktaking paper on public opinion and privacy research, Colin Bennett posed several questions which, if pursued in cross-national research, will enrich our knowledge of privacy, and at the same time highlight comparisons bearing on the issue of privacy regulation. Researchers in business schools have been pioneers in cross-national studies of privacy from consumer and corporate perspectives. For example, Steven Bellman and his associates hypothesized that “cross-cultural values will be associated with differences in concern about information privacy” (2003:7). Drawing upon Bennett’s, the work of Bellman et al., among others, and our own research it is possible to make the following observations in the form of questions in search of answers. It is hoped that our international privacy survey will shed light on these questions:

- (a) How do demographic variables pan out in cross-national surveys of privacy? Do we expect to find that cross-national variations will remain when controlling for various demographic variables, such as education, gender, race, age, income, etc.? How will cross-national variations in attitudes to privacy compare to within-country variations?
- (b) To what extent can one explain variations in responses to privacy items on the basis of political culture variables? In other words, is the

attitude to privacy shaped by the unique historical experience of the country in question?

- (c) Is it the case that countries which experienced authoritarian regimes orient themselves differently to privacy than those living in liberal-democratic states, and in what ways?
- (d) Similarly, how will the cultural distinction between collectivist and individualist orientations at the societal level manifest itself in terms of attitudes to privacy?
- (e) How do individuals in cross-national surveys rank-order privacy as a value relative to other values, including the value of human rights?
- (f) Is the attitude to privacy contingent upon orientations to technology generally, i.e., the more individuals understand the technology the more likely that they will endow technology with elements of trust in terms of protecting their privacy?
- (g) Do people know, and do they care to know, what happens to the information that is routinely collected about them? Or, is their concern directly correlated to the type of personal information discussed (health, financial, etc.)
- (h) How familiar is privacy legislation to citizens, and the extent to which they are likely to make use of such legislation?
- (i) Are internet users aware of privacy policies (so-called privacy seals) that are posted on the web sites of various public and private sector organizations? What do users think of these policies? Do they consider them adequate measures of privacy protection?
- (j) What is the extent and nature of the relationship (correlation), if any, among the four components of privacy to which we referred above, e.g., informational, territorial, bodily and communicational privacy? Is the saliency of these privacy components the same cross-nationally?
- (k) Since the media has great influence on public attitudes to key issues in the public domain, and privacy is one of them, should we not ask about respondents' sources of information about privacy issues?
- (l) Since our concern in this project is with four different types of actors (as citizens, travelers, employees, and consumers), do people in different countries orient themselves differently to privacy, depending on the role(s) they occupy?
- (m) Does the extent to which consumers are willing to trade information about themselves in return for personal benefits of material or non-material kind vary cross-nationally?
- (n) What do consumers think of fair information practices as they relate to the three main justice perspectives discussed in the literature: distributive, procedural and interactional?
- (o) Privacy has almost been twinned in policy and media discourse with security. Do people in various countries perceive it in this manner, or do they consider it to be a uniquely American concern that is less relevant to their situation?

- (p) What do citizens think of the practice whereby governments provide the United States with advance information on travelers destined for the United States? To what extent could this be considered a sign of compromising individual privacy and national sovereignty?

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