

Department of Computer Science
Graduate Comprehensive Exam
in
Communication
Spring 2018

- **Answer the question on the paper supplied.**
- **Please use a DARK PEN instead of a light pencil. You will be responsible if words are not recognizable.**
- **Write on only one side of the paper.**
- **Write your SIX-DIGIT Texas State ID in the top right corner of each page of your answer. Do NOT put your name anywhere on the answers.**
- **If the answer is written on more than one page, number the pages consecutively.**

Because your opinions are called for, there are no right or wrong answers. Your responses should include justifications for your views, and your analysis should be thorough and communicated clearly.

Joe had a hard time adjusting to college life and went to see a therapist to talk about his problems. While he was in the therapist's waiting room, he saw another student, whom he did not know. Later that day, he got onto Facebook and saw the picture of that student along with her name in his "People You May Know" list. Facebook's "People You May Know" function gives users suggestions as to which other Facebook users they may know and want to connect with. Facebook does not disclose the exact data sources it employs to create the "People You May Know" suggestions. Joe knew his therapist was not a Facebook user and was surprised to learn the identity of a total stranger who is most likely seeing the same therapist.

1. Is it okay for Facebook to use information that Joe and the other student in his therapist's waiting room agreed to share with Facebook, such as the location information of their cell phones and enrollment in the same college, to reveal their identities to each other? Explain why or why not.
2. Is it okay for Facebook to use information about the same contact in its users' contact lists (e.g., their therapist, who's not a Facebook user and has not directly shared his contact information with Facebook) to suggest a connection? Explain why or why not.
3. Suppose Joe were a businessman and, instead of getting contact information for one of his therapist's patients (which is protected by law), he received contact information for a rival businessma's client (which is not protected by law). Would there be a problem with Joe using that information to try to get the client's business? Explain why or why not.
4. Should Facebook be liable for inadvertently disclosing information protected by law (such as medical information) or information that can harm a person or business (such as giving access to a businessperson's customers to a rival)? Explain why or why not.
5. If Facebook's algorithm cannot reasonably determine when disclosing information about possible connections between its users may cause harm or be unlawful, should Facebook be forced to get rid of the "People You May Know" feature? Explain why or why not.