A New Theory of Communication: Privacy Surrender for Security Theory

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Abstract

Abstract

This thesis seeks to analyze the viability of a newly proposed theory of communication, Privacy Surrender for Security Theory (PSST), by analyzing a quantitative survey administered by the researcher. Proposed in 2018 by a team of undergraduate students, Privacy Surrender for Security Theory seeks to explain why American citizens are willing to surrender their personal privacy rights for the sake of national security. The original team of researchers prepared a survey to further their study, and the researcher chose to administer a revised version of that survey through Facebook and a group message. Most participants surveyed said knowing that the National Security Administration has surveillance programs in place made them feel safer, yet when asked if knowing that the National Security Administration could access their personal information made them feel violated, many agreed. The survey data reveals that American citizens generally agree that the nation is vulnerable to acts of terror, yet the data also reveals that Americans are divided on their feelings on surrendering their personal privacy rights for the sake of increasing national security. An analysis of the data reveals evidence that supports the third axiom of the proposed theory, and further research is suggested to continue analyzing the first two axioms of PSST.

Keywords: American national security, privacy rights, surrender, communication theory

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Introduction

Tasked with proposing a new theory of communication, five undergraduate students stared at a dry erase board in their university classroom one fall afternoon in 2018. Words in green ink littered the white space, fruit of a productive brainstorming session. As the five students examined the board, they began to isolate phrases that caught their attention. They circled words such as "Netflix," "Collective Memory," terrorism," "Cultivation Theory," and "privacy rights." At the end of the semester, the five students submitted their completed theory proposal, entitled Privacy Surrender for Security Theory, otherwise known as PSST, because "psst…" they had a secret for communications scholars and the general American public.

With the professor's encouragement, four of the students spent their winter break refining the proposal to submit it to three conferences in the Eastern United States. In the spring 2019 semester, the students presented their proposed Privacy Surrender for Security Theory at the Eastern Communication Association annual conference in Providence, Rhode Island, the National Conference of Undergraduate Research held in Kennesaw, Georgia, and Liberty University's Research Week in Lynchburg, Virginia. Scholars, professors, and peers alike all asked the same question to the four researchers: "Will anyone conduct the survey to confirm or deny this proposed theory?" Three of the four students graduated, so Abigail Brewer, the remaining student, decided to conduct the survey to analyze the validity of the proposed theory.

Overview

This thesis analyzes quantitative data to further previous research conducted on Privacy Surrender for Security Theory. Up until this point, only a content analysis has been conducted to

create the foundation of PSST. The original team of undergraduate researchers developed and proposed the theory, and they created a digital survey to gather quantitative data to determine the theory's viability. Abigail Brewer, the remaining researcher, will extend the theory's current research by analyzing the results of a revised version of the survey the team created.

First, the researcher will share a literature review to demonstrate why Privacy Surrender for Security Theory is both relevant to society and to communication research. Next, the researcher will describe the axioms and the framework of the theory. She will then state her hypothesis and explain the methodology, limitations, and survey questions. After analyzing the responses to the survey, the researcher will explain her findings, propose ideas for future research, and draw conclusions.

Creating PSST

Privacy Surrender for Security Theory, otherwise known as PSST, was originally created and proposed by Abigail Brewer, Hanna Bathrick, Kasey Lange, and Robert Goodwin. PSST is comprised of the following three theories of communication: Collective Memory, Cultivation Theory, and Communication Privacy Management Theory. PSST seeks to explain why the American public is seemingly no longer bothered by the covert surveillance of the National Security Administration, for what was once a public outcry is now relegated to memes, jokes, and quick quips in conversation.

Literature Review

To establish the relevance and necessity of the proposed theory, literature is analyzed that connects Privacy Surrender for Security Theory to society and to communication theory

research. Portions of this literature review have previously appeared in the original Privacy Surrender for Security Theory proposal paper.

Relevance to Society

When Edward Snowden, a contractor for the Central Intelligence Agency, originally fled the United States in 2013 as a whistle-blower, he ignited a national outrage over the classified information he leaked to the public about the capabilities and practices of the National Security Administration. According to Snowden, the National Security Administration regularly conducted surveillance of American citizens through their cell phones, laptops, and other electric devices (CNN Library, 2019). Initially, the American public was alarmed; however, as years passed, the public outcry grew quieter and quieter, even as evidence revealing the National Security Administration's programs grew.

In 2016, Pew Research Center conducted a survey to better understand the American public's views on terrorism fifteen years after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Survey results showed that 49% of Americans surveyed said that they are more concerned that the government has not gone far enough in putting preventative policies in place to counteract terrorism, whereas only 33% said they were afraid the government had stepped too far into the civil liberties of American citizens ("Fifteen Years," 2016). Additionally, Pew Research also reported in 2016 that 57% of surveyed Americans believe it is unacceptable for the government to surveil its citizens; however, 82% believe it is okay to surveil terrorism suspects ("State of Privacy," 2016).

Cornell Law argues that most debates and legal cases regarding personal privacy rights center around differing interpretations of the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution. The Fourth Amendment reads as follows:

> The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized. (Cornell Law)

Cornell Law further expounds upon the Fourth Amendment by explaining that the amendment protects Americans from unlawful searches, random arrests, and incorrect surveillance practices. In addition, the Fourth Amendment is often cited when discussing privacy laws (Cornell Law). Because privacy rights are part of the Constitution, they are a critical component of modern culture, especially in the digital age.

Finally, the International Association for Privacy Professionals (IAPP) notes that the issue of privacy rights in America has transitioned into the rhetoric of the general public, for the topic of personal privacy has appeared in sitcoms, documentaries, government legislation, and magazines (Bracy, 2015). The IAPP, along with *The Washington Post*, both reference episodes of the hit television sitcom *Parks & Rec*, in which key characters grapple with Gryzzl, a new company that collects personal information from its customers (Bracy, 2015; Peterson, 2015). Gryzzl wants to build a new headquarters in the city of Pawnee, but the town's residents do not like that the company can access their personal texts, emails, bank statements, and records to tailor suggestions and gifts to the interests of every individual (CBS, 2015). In the end, the

characters recognize that they cannot stop the company, but they argue that the invasion of personal privacy is unfair.

Relevance to Theory

As noted earlier, Privacy Surrender for Security Theory is rooted in three different communication theories. Together, when placed within the context of American national security, the theories of Collective Memory, Cultivation Theory, and Communication Privacy Management Theory all tell the story of why the American public has largely quieted about the issue of personal privacy rights and government surveillance.

Collective Memory. The first piece of the PSST framework is the theory of Collective Memory. The researcher describes the history of Collective Memory as follows:

> Collective memory is a widely studied phenomenon that highlights "a form of memory that transcends individuals and is shared by a group" (Wertsch & Roedinger, 2008, p. 318). Though the term "Collective Memory" traces its history to Halbwach's studies from 1925, "we can trace the notion of group memory to the earliest texts in Western civilization, in Archaic Greek culture" (Russell, 2006, p.792). A cross-disciplinary theory, this topic is of great interest to communicators, psychologists, and historians alike as it explains how history can be written or re-written by a group's leading voices. (Brewer et al., 2018, p. 7)

Because Privacy Surrender Security Theory states that the media propagates a narrative of fear through television shows about violence and acts of terror, the theory of Collective Memory is useful to understand how the media can create narratives through using group memory.

Brewer continues her explanation of the historical impact of Collective Memory by sharing the following examples:

> Various groups throughout history have used the principles of Collective Memory to re-write their respective histories, including forming cultural identities steeped in the shared memories of group members. This can apply to social groups who remember certain highlighted events from over the years, or to people of a nation who recall their history by sharing the memories of a few significant military victories. In addition, the group will subconsciously forget other events as well (Roedinger & DeSoto, 2016). For example, Americans might remember the brilliance of World War II's D-Day while choosing to neglect the memory of those who died in Hiroshima. As a group, this shapes Americans' perspective and historical knowledge of the United States.
>
> Political leaders and news media have the ability to take advantage of Collective Memory in telling the stories of today in such a way that favors current agendas. According to Zelizer [2018] "collective memory is an intricate set of cues by which the past is invoked to make sense of the present and that systematically crafts our engagement with terror's representation" (p. 136). Muzzatti [2017] also notes that current political events and the creation of new media content consistently parallel, for TV shows and movies often reflect recent happenings in society. In addition, the media will place past events in the present to create a fear of terror in the general public (Zelizer, 2018, p. 137). Because Collective Memory impacts the American narrative, terrorist attacks and crime are not simply random, singular events but are rather part of a much larger

> narrative of recent history to which Americans are exposed to through media consumption.
>
> By realizing that news media leaders use the principles of Collective Memory to shape the current fear of terror, one can better understand the weight and significance of Cultivation Theory (CT). Television allows the selected Collective Memory narrative to be broadcasted into almost every home in America, for 95.9% of households have a television set with the average American consuming over 10 hours of television content daily (Nielsen, 2018; Koblin, 2016). If CT is true, then there is little chance of stopping the effects of media's chosen narrative invading societal norms. (Brewer et al., 2018, pp. 7-9)

In the same way that Collective Memory shows how American citizens remember the military history of the United States through a curated group memory, Collective Memory can also be used to demonstrate how American citizens are being persuaded to view the safety of their future. For this reason, Collective Memory is the first communication theory used in the framework of Privacy Surrender for Security Theory.

Cultivation Theory. Created by George Gerbner in the late 1960s and 1970s, Cultivation Theory seeks to explain how the media impacts the general public through curating narratives surrounding topics such as violence and terrorism (Potter, 2014). According to Potter, Gerbner's theory explains how the media institutions, the mass messages, and the overarching effect of said messages sent by the media institutions impacted society (Potter, 2014).

Potter later quotes Gerbner, who wrote in 1970 that "mass production and rapid distribution of messages create new symbolic environments that reflect the structure and

functions of the institutions that transmit them" (as cited in Potter, 2014, p. 1016). This correlates directly to the theory of Collective Memory discussed earlier in the literature review. In addition, Potter also quotes Gerbner's 1969 writings, saying that "mass-produced messages form 'a common culture through which communities cultivate shared and public notions about facts, values, and contingencies of human existence'" (as cited in Potter, 2014, p. 1016).

According to Bryant and Morin's research on trends within the mass communication research discipline, Cultivation Theory is one of the three most-referenced communication theories from 1956-2000, for it was referenced in 56 different articles (Bryant & Morin, 2004). The results of the articles analyzed show that people who view television on a regular basis are more likely to have a negative view of the world around them (Bryant & Morin, 2004). Their findings continue to strengthen the argument of Privacy Surrender for Security Theory, which suggests that media consumption affects American citizens' perceptions of national security and their personal privacy rights. In addition, Morgan and Shanahan (2010) report that over 500 studies involving Cultivation Theory have been published.

When Cultivation Theory and Collective Memory are applied to the specific context of American security, they together paint a picture of media leaders having the capacity, authority, and opportunity to author the narrative of violence and terrorism depicted in television media. By carefully crafting the narrative they wish to tell about violence and terrorism in America, media leaders can influence the American public regarding citizens' thoughts on personal privacy rights and national security. This power, when combined with Communication Privacy Management Theory, lays the foundation for the framework of Privacy Surrender for Security Theory.

Communication Privacy Management Theory. Sarah Petronio, with the help of Robert Littlefield and Judith Martin, developed Communication Privacy Management Theory over a period of twenty years (Petronio, 2004). Her theory seeks to explain why and how people negotiate privacy boundaries and disclose personal information to other individuals and groups. The theory has been used to explore arenas such as family privacy, social media privacy, and societal privacy norms. According to Petronio (2004), disclosing personal information creates privacy boundaries that must be re-negotiated in future conversations:

> when people disclose to each other, they essentially link others into a privacy boundary. Once that happens, there are expectations that disclosers have when others are privy to their information. In addition, the recipients essentially become co-owners or shareholders of the information because of concomitant expectations that they will keep the information confidential. (p. 203)

Originally, this theory focused on interpersonal boundaries between individuals in face to face conversations who had to decide whether or not to disclose personal information. In essence, the decision to lose the rights to the personal information was worth the reward of what the other person could provide. However, the theory has since expanded to also include interpersonal interactions through technology. With the introduction of digital media, social media sites, and advances in security technology, discussions on privacy boundaries between individuals and corporations has risen to forefront of Communication Privacy Management research.

In 2007, researchers conducted 154 face-to-face interviews of employees from a variety of organizations and asked questions regarding their opinions on company surveillance. The data revealed that “interviewees reported that surveillance is beneficial or necessary (68%), gave a

mixed reaction (17%), appeared ambivalent (10%), or said it is bad (6%)" (Allen et al., 2007, p. 183). Later in the results, Allen et al. notes that "of the statements on whether surveillance is problematic, the most frequent either express a general dislike for surveillance (26%) or indicate it is an invasion of privacy (17%)" (2007, p. 185). This study demonstrates that surveillance practices were in question well before Snowden's revelations to national media outlets.

In 2011, ten graduate students were interviewed and asked about their opinions on closed circuit televisions being placed in public spaces at their midwestern university. The ten students were initially positive in their remarks about the use of closed circuit televisions to increase safety; however, by the time they reached the conclusion of their interviews, several of the participants noted that the closed circuit television gave them a heightened sense of safety rather than actually increasing their real safety. Overall, the students had differing views on privacy rights and the use of surveillance, but they agreed that the increased possibility of catching criminals and decreasing violence was worth the surrendered privacy in public. (Walton et al., 2011). Thus, the students cognitively were willing to negotiate their privacy boundaries in accordance with Communication Privacy Management Theory to gain the reward of perceived security at their university.

Communication Privacy Management Theory posits that people will surrender personal privacy to receive a perceived reward for sharing that information. That reward could range from increased safety to protection against crime, to organizational unity, or to another perceived benefit. When placed within the context of Privacy Surrender for Security Theory, Communication Privacy Management Theory suggests that increased national security and

perceived safety from terrorism and violence is a worthwhile reward for surrendering rights to personal privacy.

Axioms and Framework

Three core axioms comprise the Privacy Surrender for Security Theory, as articulated by Brewer, Bathrick, Lange, and Goodwin (2018). The first axiom is simple: the media persuades the public to fear the possible threat of terrorism by weaving a new narrative about national security. The second axiom supposes that American citizens make decisions about personal privacy that are based in fear. Finally, the final axiom states that security is so important that giving up personal privacy rights is worth the price.

Privacy Surrender for Security Theory, otherwise known as PSST, is assembled like a formula. In the context of American national security and personal privacy rights, Collective Memory is applied to Cultivation Theory like a filter. When Collective Memory is used as a filter to view Cultivation Theory within the context of American national security and personal privacy rights, it suggests that the leaders of American media can tell the history of terrorism and national security in such a way that makes it appealing to viewers to willingly surrender their personal privacy rights for the sake of greater protection. Together, when these two theories are combined with Communication Privacy Management Theory, they all suggest that the cost of surrendering personal privacy is worth the greater security afforded by the American government. Thus, because American citizens decided it was worth it to surrender their personal privacy rights, they largely ceased their complaints about the once-appalling information Edward Snowden revealed.

Hypothesis

The researcher hypothesizes that the American public's media consumption habits impact their views on national security, potential violence and terrorism, and the surrendering of personal privacy rights. To test the hypothesis, the researcher administered a survey to collect data from anonymous participants. Survey questions determined the generation of each participant, if the participant is an American citizen, and his or her thoughts on media violence, national security, and personal privacy. After collecting the responses, the researcher tallied the percentages for each question to determine the viability of Privacy Surrender for Security Theory, otherwise known as PSST.

Methodology

Before administering the survey, the researcher approved her methodology and materials through the Institutional Review Board at Liberty University. To protect the identities of all participants, the researcher decided to make all survey responses anonymous. No compensation was awarded for completing the survey, and no one was required to share the survey with his or her friends.

Survey Process

To simplify the process of collecting responses, the researcher chose to administer the survey through computers, cell phones, Facebook, and group texts. This allowed participants to take the survey whenever they please, and it allowed the researcher to reach out to a larger pool of possible participants rather than conducting face-to-face interviews or collecting written responses.

In addition, all responses were multiple choice, so participants were not asked to complete any short answer questions. This expedited the survey completion time, thus encouraging more potential participants to take the time to complete the survey. Eliminating short answer responses also helped increase the anonymity of the survey results because the researcher was unable to identify any participants based upon writing styles, word choice, or personal examples shared within the responses.

Survey Participants

Potential participants in the survey were gathered through convenience sampling of both Facebook and a cell phone group text message. To easily collect responses from a varied audience, the survey was released through a typical Facebook newsfeed post by attaching the link within the text of the message. Originally posted by Abigail Brewer, the survey was shared over seventeen times from her page by her friends and family. Her friends and family also had people share the post from their respective pages, thereby creating a convenience sample that snowballed.

Participants responses were divided into six categories based upon Pew Research Center's division of generations. Individuals between the ages of 18 to 22 are part of Generation Z, and individuals between the ages of 23 to 38 are part of the Millennial generation. Next, Generation X is comprised of people from 39-54 years old, and Boomers are between the ages of 55-73. Finally, the Silent generation is comprised of anyone over the age of 74 (Generations and Age, 2019). By organizing the participants by generation, the researcher will be able to pinpoint trends regarding media violence, perceived threats of terrorism, perceptions of national security,

and personal privacy rights that are similar and different between the five generations, thereby offering a deeper look into the views of the American public.

Survey Questions

The survey includes twelve questions. The first question asks for participants to select their respective age brackets, and the second question asks if participants are American citizens. The next four questions ask about participants' media consumption habits and thoughts about privacy rights and national security. For each response, participants select a number on a Likert scale. These four questions are as follows:

3. How often do you watch TV shows featuring crime, terrorism, or government conspiracy theories?
4. How often do you watch news media programs?
5. How often do you think about issues of national security or terrorism?
6. How do you feel about the surveillance of citizens by the National Security Administration (NSA)?

The final six questions ask participants to choose how strongly they agree or disagree to various statements by selecting responses on the same Likert scale used previously. These six questions are as follows:

7. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "America is a safer place due to government surveillance of citizens."
8. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "America is a nation that is vulnerable to terrorist attacks."

9. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “As an American, I feel personally vulnerable to terrorist attacks.”
10. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “I don’t mind surrendering my privacy when it is for the betterment of society.”
11. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “NSA surveillance programs make me feel safer knowing that someone is watching to stop potential acts of terrorism.”
12. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “I feel violated knowing that the NSA surveillance programs have access to my private information.”

Limitations

Survey Location

Because the survey was administered through Facebook and a group message, only people who had access to the Internet could participate. However, it was possible for the survey to be sent to people by simply copying and pasting the link of the original post, so it is possible that respondents could have taken the survey without having a Facebook account. Facebook was used to administer the survey because it is a simple platform to gather responses and reach a variety of potential participants.

Citizenship

Because the theory currently focuses on American citizens’ perspectives on national security and privacy rights, participants of the survey are limited to American citizens only. To differentiate between American citizens and all other participants, respondents were asked to

mark whether or not they were American citizens. Three respondents selected the “no” choice, so those responses were not included in the data analysis.

Age Demographic

To protect underage participants, the survey required participants to be at least eighteen years of age. One respondent marked that he or she was under eighteen, so his or her responses were not included in the data analysis. Because the survey had an age requirement, it did prevent an entire demographic from participating in the study, which could affect overall findings from the data analysis. However, to protect underage participants, the researcher deemed the age requirement to be necessary.

Gender

The researcher chose not to ask participants to identify their genders in their survey response. Therefore, there is no way to analyze the differences and similarities in responses based upon gender categories. There is no way to determine if participation was predominantly male, female, or other, which could impact data trends if the majority of participants all had identified as one particular gender.

Survey Data

The researcher organized the results of the survey into three categories: percentages, questions 3-6, and questions 7-12. The researcher will first share the makeup of the pool of participants, and then she will review the responses to each question. Finally, the researcher will examine overall trends across the data, culminating with the relevancy of the data to the viability of the proposed theory in question, Privacy Surrender for Security Theory.

Percentages

188 total participants completed the Privacy Surrender for Security survey. Out of the 188 participants, one person noted on his or her survey that he or she was under eighteen years of age, and three people marked that they were not American citizens. Because these four individuals did not meet the minimum standards for participating in the survey, their responses are not included in the data analysis. Thus, the total number of surveys analyzed is 184, and all percentages from this point forward reflect this total.

39 participants marked that they were between the ages of 18-22, placing themselves within the Generation Z category (21.2%). Millennials made up 18.5% of the data, with 34 individuals marking that they were between the ages of 23-38. 50 participants selected the age range of 39-54, signifying that they belong to Generation X (27.2%). The largest category, Boomers, had 55 participants (29.9%). Finally, the Silent Generation, or those above the age of 74, had six participants (3.3%).

Questions 3-6

The first four survey questions introduce participants to the topics discussed within the survey, leading up to the statements in Questions 7-12. The first two questions of the survey request participants to rank the amount of time they spend watching television shows involving crime, terrorism, government conspiracies, and news media. Questions 5-6 ask participants to consider their thoughts and feelings about national security, terrorism, and the surveillance activities conducted by the National Security Administration.

Question 3. Question 3 on the survey reads as follows: “How often do you watch TV shows featuring crime, terrorism, or government conspiracy theories?” Overall, 13 participants

marked “Never,” and eight participants marked “Always” (7.1% and 4.3%). The most popular response was “Occasionally,” which received 74 selections, or 40.2% of the total. The final two choices, “Sometimes” and “Often,” comprised 27.2% and 21.2% of the total responses, respectively. 50 participants selected “Sometimes,” and 39 participants selected “Often.”

In Generation Z, the most popular responses were “Often,” with 13 selections, and “Occasionally,” with 10 selections; Millennials chose “Occasionally” 13 times and “Sometimes” 10 times. In Generation X, “Occasionally” was the most popular response, and “Sometimes” was second highest response. “Occasionally” received 23 selections, and “Sometimes” received 14 selections. Amongst Boomers, the trend follows suit, with 25 Boomers selecting “Occasionally” and 17 selecting “Sometimes.” In the Silent Generation, three participants selected “Occasionally;” two selected “Sometimes.”

Interestingly, the main responses for every generation are either “Occasionally” or “Sometimes,” except for Generation Z, who most often selected “Often.” Therefore, according to this data set, the 18-22-year-old generation is the generation that most often watches television shows featuring crime, terrorism, or government conspiracy theories.

Question 4. The next question asks, “How often do you watch news media programs?” Only three participants marked “Always;” however, 24 participants marked “Never” (1.6% and 13%). “Occasionally” and “Often” were somewhat similar, for 64 people marked “Occasionally” and 56 people marked “Often” (34.8% and 30.4%). Lastly, 37 participants selected “Sometimes,” which accounted for the remaining 20.1% of responses.

In Generation Z, 20 participants selected “Occasionally,” which is almost 50% of the total participants in Generation Z. In the Millennial generation, 12 participants marked

"Occasionally." 18 participants marked "Occasionally" from the Generation X participants, but 13 participants marked "Often" while 11 others marked "Sometimes." Of the 55 Boomers, 30 said they often watch news media programs. In the Silent Generation, three respondents said "Often" and two marked "Occasionally." One marked "Sometimes."

Question 5. The fifth survey question asks participants about their thoughts on terrorism and national security. It reads, "How often do you think about issues of national security or terrorism?" Interestingly, very few respondents marked "Never" or "Always." Instead, many fell somewhere between "Occasionally," "Sometimes," and "Often." Nine participants marked "Never," and three participants marked "Always" (4.9% and 1.6%). "Sometimes" was selected by 69 respondents, and "Often" was chosen 58 times (37.5% and (31.5%). 45 participants marked "Occasionally," which accounted for the remaining 24.5% of the total.

In Generation Z, the most popular response was "Sometimes," followed by "Occasionally." Millennials, on the other hand, most frequently selected "Often," followed by "Sometimes" and "Occasionally." Generation X most frequently selected "Sometimes," and the Boomers most frequently selected "Often." The Silent Generation mostly chose "Sometimes." Interestingly, this data shows that Millennials and Boomers most often think about issues regarding national security and surrender, whereas Generation Z, Generation X, and the Silent Generation all predominantly selected "Sometimes."

Question 6. Question 6 asks participants, "How do you feel about the surveillance of citizens by the National Security Administration (NSA)?" Five Participants marked "Strongly Agree," meaning that they are highly in favor of the National Security Administration surveilling American citizens (2.7%). 40 participants marked "Agree," signifying that they were favorable

towards the idea of government surveillance (21.7%). "Neutral" garnered the largest response, with 72 participants selecting that they were ambivalent towards the actions of the National Security Administration (39.1%). Ranking slightly highly than "Agree," "Disagree" received 43 responses (23.4%), and 24 participants marked "Strongly Disagree" (13%).

Over 50% of Generation Z chose "neutral" when asked about how they felt about the National Security Administration's use of surveillance on American citizens. Among Millennials, 14 participants selected "neutral;" however, 12 participants erred on the side of disagreeing while eight participants said they agreed with the National Security Administration's use of surveillance. On the other hand, Generation X was fairly split between the three choices of "Disagree" (15 selections), "Neutral" (18 selections), and "Agree" (12 selections). The other five participants from Generation X chose "Strongly Disagree." Interestingly, Boomers tended to select choices that showed they disagreed with surveillance practices. Only one Boomer strongly agreed, while 12 marked "Agree" and 19 marked "Neutral." 11 Boomers chose "Disagree," and 12 chose "Strongly Disagree." The six Silent Generation participants were very spread out, for two disagreed while one remained neutral. Two others agreed, and one strongly agreed.

The data for Question 6 shows a variety of responses regarding feelings about government surveillance. Most responses revealed neutrality towards the topic, especially from participants in Generation Z. However, the data from Generation X shows an almost even split between those that disagree versus those that agree, as well as a similar number that chose to be neutral. Boomers, on the other hand, tended to disagree.

Questions 7-12

The following five questions each ask survey participants to rank their level of agreeance with a series of statements. The statements refer to topics such as national security, personal privacy rights, preconceived notions on the potentiality of terrorism, and government surveillance. Similar to the section above, overall percentages will be shared first, and then the researcher will disclose the generational responses before identifying trends and drawing conclusions.

Question 7. The first statement reads as follows: “America is a safer place due to government surveillance of citizens." 22 participants strongly disagreed with the statement, and 43 participants merely disagreed (12% and 23.4%). 59 participants said they were neutral on the subject, and 54 participants agreed that government surveillance increases the safety of America (32.1% and 29.3%). Only six participants strongly agreed (3.3%).

Overall, Generation Z agrees that America is safer due to government surveillance, for 15 participants either agreed or strongly agreed, whereas 10 participants disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, compared to the 13 people that agreed, 14 participants in Generation Z selected “Neutral,” indicating a widespread feeling of neutrality.

Interestingly, Millennials were much more varied in their responses to Question 7 as opposed to their choices in Question 6. “Disagree” and “Neutral” tied with nine participants each, and “Agree” and “Strongly Disagree” came in a close second and third place with eight and six participants respectively. “Strongly Agree” garnered two responses. Generation X was also well divided, for 14 selected “Agree” and 19 selected “Neutral.” 13 chose “Disagree,” and four strongly disagreed. Consistent with the varied response trend, Boomers also congregated

around the responses of “Neutral” (16), “Agree” (17), and “Disagree” (14). Somewhat similar to Question 6, the Silent Generation had two responses for both “Strongly Disagree” and “Agree,” and it had one response for both “Neutral” and “Strongly Agree.”

Question 8. The next statement asks participants about how they feel about terrorism. The statement says, “America is a nation that is vulnerable to terrorist attacks." 113 participants, the overwhelming majority, all selected “Agree” (61.4%). 26 participants selected “Strongly Agree” (14.1%). 21 participants marked “Neutral,” and 18 participants chose “Disagree” (11.4% and 9.8%). Six participants selected “Strongly Disagree” (3.3%).

23 of the 39 Generation Z participants selected “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” when asked if they thought America is vulnerable to terrorism. 11 chose “Strongly Disagree” or “Disagree,” and five were neutral. Similarly, 24 of the 34 Millennial participants selected “Agree” or “Strongly Agree,” while four disagreed with the statement and six chose neutrality. 40 out of the 50 Generation X participants agreed with the statement in some form, and the other ten either disagreed or remained neutral. The trend continues amongst the Boomers, for 47 out of 55 Boomers agreed with the statement. Five out of the six Silent Generation also agreed. Thus, across all generations, most participants agreed that America is a nation vulnerable to terrorism, with over 50% of each generation either selecting “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.”

Question 9. The ninth question reads, “As an American, I feel personally vulnerable to terrorist attacks." 72 participants marked that they agreed that they felt personally vulnerable to terrorist attacks, and seven marked that they strongly agreed with the statement (39.1% and 3.8%). 12 participants marked “Strongly Disagree,” and 43 marked “Disagree” (6.5% and 23.4%). 50 respondents were neutral (27.2%).

Of Generation Z participants, most either agreed, were neutral, or disagreed with the statement. Millennials' top response was "Disagree," which had 12 selections. "Agree" and "Neutral" came in second and third place with 11 and eight selections respectively. Similar to Generation Z, Generation X's top choices were "Agree," "Neutral," and "Disagree." Boomers, however, had two dominant responses: "Agree" (25) and "Neutral" (15). The six Silent Generation participants most often chose "Agree."

The data shows that "Agree," "Neutral," and "Disagree" were the most popular choices. However, Generation Z and Generation X had similar responses, whereas Millennials' most frequent response was to disagree with the statement. Interestingly, many participants marked that they were neutral regarding their personal vulnerability to acts of terror.

Question 10. Question 10 says, "I don't mind surrendering my privacy when it is for the betterment of society." Six participants, or 3.3%, strongly agree with the statement. 45 participants marked "Agree," and 35 selected "Neutral" (24.5% and 19%). 62 participants marked "Disagree," and 36 people marked "Strongly Disagree" (33.7% and 19.6%). Just over half of the participants marked either "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree."

Generation Z is divided on this issue, but most of its participants disagree. "Agree" and "Disagree" each received 11 responses apiece. Seven others are neutral, and the remaining seven strongly disagree. Millennials also largely disagree, for 12 out of 34 marked "Disagree" and nine selected "Strongly Disagree." Similarly, Generation X mostly disagrees as well, for 29 marked either "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree." 17 others either agreed or strongly agreed. Boomers, however, are more dispersed among the choices. Their top response was "Disagree" (19), followed by "Neutral" (16), and "Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" (both received 10 apiece). The

Silent Generation chose “Agree” most often, and “Neutral” and “Disagree” fell close behind with three, two and one responses, respectively.

Both Millennials and Generation X disagreed with the statement the most, for although “Disagree” was the most popular response for Boomers, the other categories were ranked close behind. Generation Z is divided though the majority leans toward disagreeing, and the Silent Generation most often agreed with the statement.

Question 11. The eleventh statement states, “NSA surveillance programs make me feel safer knowing that someone is watching to stop potential acts of terrorism." 17 participants marked “Strongly Disagree,” and 37 marked “Disagree” (9.2% and 20.1%). 35 selected “Neutral,” and 12 selected “Strongly Agree” (19% and 6.5%). 83 participants agreed with the statement (45.1%).

17 participants from Generation Z either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, and 12 disagreed or strongly disagreed. The second highest response, “Neutral,” received 10 responses. Similarly, Millennials were also divided. 14 respondents said they either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 12 either agreed or disagreed. Only eight Millennials marked that they were “Neutral.” In contrast, 27 Generation X participants selected “Agree,” and only 14 Generation X members chose to disagree or strongly disagree. The Boomers responded in a similar fashion, for “Agree” received 28 selections while “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” received a mere 14 responses combined. Four members of the Silent Generation chose to agree, and the other two marked “Neutral.”

Interestingly, the younger generations were more evenly divided, but Generation X, the Boomers, and the Silent Generation all overwhelmingly agreed that the National Security

Administration surveillance programs increased their perceived feelings of safety from potential acts of terrorism. Both Generation Z and Millennials had varied responses predominantly between “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Neutral,” but neither of the younger generations had as wide of margins between the choices as the older three generations.

Question 12. Question 12 reads as follows: “I feel violated knowing that the NSA surveillance programs have access to my private information." Four participants strongly disagree, whereas 46 participants selected “Disagree” (2.2% and 25%). 47 participants were neutral, and 63 agreed (25.5% and 34.2%). 24 participants, or 13%, strongly agreed with the statement.

Generation Z once again varied in its responses, for 10 participants disagreed while 20 either agreed or strongly agreed. Amongst Millennials, “Neutral” received 10 selections, and “Agree” and “Strongly Agree receive 14 selections combined. “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” receive 10 combined responses. Generation X is also divided, for 16 participants disagree with the statement in some form while 27 either agree or strongly agree. The Boomers are also split, for “Neutral” received a total of 18 selections. “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” received a combined 24 selections, and “Disagree” received 13. In the Silent Generation, two people agreed, and one disagreed. The other three participants were all neutral. Overall, in regard to perceived violations of personal privacy, all five generations had varied responses. Many agreed, but many also disagreed. The choice “Neutral” was also quite popular, and it led to greater variety within the data.

Analysis

After reviewing the data collected through the anonymous survey, the researcher has determined that there is evidence for the viability of Privacy Surrender for Security Theory. The data reveals that generations have differing perspectives on terrorism, national security, and privacy rights, and this aligns with previously published literature regarding Collective Memory, Cultivation Theory, and Communication Privacy Management Theory.

PSST Findings

Privacy Surrender for Security Theory posits that American citizens are willing to surrender their personal privacy rights to increase national security and their perceived safety. According to the data collected from the anonymous survey, American citizens from five different generations have varied opinions about personal privacy, potential terrorism, and government surveillance. Over 80% of participants admit to watching shows involving terrorism and violence, and over 80% of participants admit to watching news programs on at least an occasional basis. Therefore, Privacy Surrender for Security is applicable across the generations of the American public.

The data from the survey responses reveals an intriguing discrepancy that supports Privacy Surrender for Security Theory. Survey responses show that approximately 75% of participants agree that America is vulnerable to terrorism, and over 40% of participants feel personally vulnerable to acts of terror. In addition, over 50% of participants attribute the surveillance practices of the National Security Administration to an increased feeling of safety in the United States. However, almost 50% of participants also agree that they feel violated knowing that the National Security Administration has access to their personal, private

information. This discrepancy – the fact that participants largely agree that government surveillance practices increases feelings of safety while also agreeing that they feel violated by surrendering their personal privacy rights to that same government – reveals a similar result to what the researchers discovered in their literature review and hypothesized in their theory proposal.

Of the 47 participants that said they watched television shows involving crime, terrorism, or government conspiracy theories often or always, 26 participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the government's surveillance programs made them feel safer (55.3%). In this same group of 47 participants, however, 25 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt violated by the National Security Administration's surveillance practices (53.2%).

Similarly, of the 59 participants that said they watch news media programs often or always, 35 participants either agreed or strongly agreed that government surveillance increased their feelings of safety (59.3%). However, 23 of these 59 participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt violated by the NSA's activities (38.9%).

Thus, despite many participants feeling like the surveillance activities violate their personal privacy, they still choose to surrender because they desire the feeling of increased safety. Why, then, do American citizens choose to agree to surrender their personal privacy rights to feel safer despite feeling violated by the government surveillance they surrender to? The axioms of Privacy Surrender for Security Theory state that American citizens surrender their rights to personal privacy because the media tells a convincing story of violence and terrorism that generates fear in the minds of the American people. The data shows that participants are willing to surrender their personal privacy rights despite feeling violated for the sake of

perceived national safety, which supports the third axiom of PSST. Whether this decision is rooted in a narrative of fear propagated by the media, as described by the first two axioms of PSST, will need to be determined by further research.

Further Research

The next step to further this research project is to conduct a second survey to analyze the role of media consumption on consumers' decisions to surrender privacy rights for the sake of national security. The survey data in this thesis provides evidence supporting the effects of Communication Privacy Management Theory within PSST, but the data does not directly address the participants' opinions on how they perceive the impact of television media on their decisions regarding surrendering their personal privacy. To gather data exploring the first two PSST axioms, an additional survey would need to be administered.

In this initial PSST survey, each generation had a varying number of participants. To better analyze the generational differences regarding Privacy Surrender for Security Theory, the researcher would like to administer the survey again with a consistent number of participants per generation. The researcher is also interested in examining potential trends relating to gender and Privacy Surrender for Security Theory. Because this initial survey was anonymous and generation-focused, the researcher did not ask participants to disclose their gender. However, noting the gender of participants in a future study might yield interesting trends in the data.

In addition, the Privacy Surrender for Security Theory has only been applied to the American context thus far. The researcher hypothesizes that the data might show different results within other cultural contexts, and the researcher also wonders if dual-citizens, international students, and foreign visitors might have differing perspectives on national security, terrorism,

and privacy rights both in the United States and abroad. To explore these arenas, additional research would need to be conducted through surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Conclusion

The research of Privacy Surrender for Security Theory has just begun; the implications of this study reveal that there is much more to be discovered about the relation between television media narratives and people's perceptions of national security and their personal privacy rights. This thesis adds a quantitative data analysis to a previously proposed study and literature review conducted by a team of undergraduate students in Fall 2018, thereby extending current research on this topic. Ultimately, the data shows that over half of participants who regularly consume television media agree that the National Security Administration's surveillance programs increase feelings of safety, and it also shows that close to half of those same participants agree that they feel violated knowing that the National Security Administration has access to their personal information. This simultaneous occurrence reveals that for some reason, despite feeling violated, American citizens choose to surrender their rights to personal privacy for the sake of increased national security. The researcher believes that with further research, the solution to this occurrence might be answered by Privacy Surrender for Security Theory.

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