

Emotion Recognition Software:

Re-Shaping Human Relationships*

Alexandra Prégent
Institute of Philosophy
Leiden University
Leiden, Netherlands
a.pregent@phil.leidenuniv.nl

ABSTRACT

Over the recent years, emotions have taken more and more place in relatively different spheres of society, including politics, sciences, and philosophy. Contradictory to what was preached in the 20th century, we now accept emotions as important part of ourselves that contributes to our reasoning and decision-making process. Furthermore, we recognized them as necessary components in the construction of relationships. This shift in the paradigm towards emotions has increased their value in the public eye. In a paradoxical way, we now tend to communicate more than ever this subjective experience and thus, as we communicate it, we insist on its personal and private status. Our emotions are ours and ours alone. But is it true? By being both recognized as a part of the inner life that is never completely reachable and as a necessary component of relationships, emotions appear to be at the edge of every concept of privacy.

This research project will work on this specific blind spot in the literature through the analysis of emotion recognition software (ERS) as a threat to both the privacy of the inner life and the privacy of relationships. The main claims are that emotions must be both recognized as (1) being more than a part of the inner self, e.g., for instance, as actively contributing to communication and the construction of relationships, and (2) considered off-limits from scrutinization and monitoring by governments and corporate in contexts in which the use of ERS disrupt and restrict the possibility to freely experience them as inner affective states and/or to freely use them as a communication tool. The hypothesis is as follows. The first premise assume that the phenomenon of emotion is commonly accepted as being a fundamental component of human experience. From that first assumption is derive the second one; that it is, therefore, a necessary element to live a meaningful life.

From that standpoint, I draw upon Helen Nissenbaum's framework of contextual integrity [1] and hypothesize that the

*Permission to make digital or hard copies of part or all of this work for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that copies are not made or distributed for profit or commercial advantage and that copies bear this notice and the full citation on the first page. Copyrights for third-party components of this work must be honored. For all other uses, contact the Owner/Author.

AIES'22, August 1–3, 2022, Oxford, United Kingdom
© 2022 Copyright is held by the owner/author(s).
ACM ISBN 978-1-4503-9247-1/22/08.
<https://doi.org/10.1145/3514094.3539534>

context in which the individual shares his or her emotions daily should be recognized as a non-violable whole (set of natural, social, cultural conditions) whose integrity allows for the exercise of this fundamental component of human experience, which is a necessity for living a meaningful life. While emotions are seen as “in the public space” because we constantly use them to communicate, I want to argue that emotions “in the public space” should be considered a priori off-limit from monitoring and scrutinization by State and corporate until proven otherwise by the contextual integrity framework.

The general stance is that a constant monitoring and scrutinization by ERS will have a disruptive effect on the way we experience and express emotions, which will have a direct impact on our way of building and maintaining relationships, putting at higher risk the possibility of achieving a meaningful life. Therefore, I want to draw what could be seen as a draconian line between what citizens on one side and what States and corporate on the other should be allowed to do and not do. Emotions should not be considered something that individuals should refrain from experiencing, communicating, and accessing, however, they should be considered highly sensitive and intimate information and, thus, States and corporate should refrain from monitoring and scrutinizing them. Furthermore, I argue that a massive deployment of ERS by government and private companies will transform the cultural and societal practices as well as affecting our fundamental rights and values.

KEYWORDS

Emotion recognition software, privacy, public and private space, emotions, relationships

ACM Reference format :

Alexandra Prégent. 2022. Emotion Recognition Software: Re-Shaping Human Relationships. In *Proceedings of the 5th. ACM Conference on Artificial Intelligence, Ethics, and Society (AIES'22), August 01-03, 2022, Oxford University, UK*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 1 page. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3514094.3539534>.

REFERENCES

- [1] Helen Nissenbaum. 2009. *Privacy in Context: Technology, Policy and the Integrity of Social Life*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 304 pages.