

Interview Assessment #2

Name of Professional: Dr. Matthew Guariglia

Profession: Policy Analyst

Company: Electronic Frontier Foundation

Date of Interview: 10/21/2020

Assessment:

This week I had the opportunity to attend a large group presentation and discussion led by Dr. Matthew Guariglia. Dr. Guariglia is a professional policy analyst with a BA from Dickinson College in Pennsylvania, a Masters from New York University, and a Ph.D. in History from the University of Connecticut as well as a winner of The Immigration and Ethnic History Society's outstanding dissertation award for his dissertation on the New York Police Department. He has research backgrounds in several different areas but most prominently he focuses on surveillance and technology. With this background, he works for the Electronic Frontier Foundation to help write useful legislation that benefits citizens' ability to maintain personal privacy from government and mass corporations.

At the beginning of the presentation, Dr. Guariglia says that he focused on the Progressive Era and early twentieth century when studying for his Ph.D. He says that exploring a lot of the arguments used and policies enacted during this era gives a key insight into how the government chooses to interact with its citizens in regard to their personal data and information. He defines surveillance as "the process of obtaining information from an individual and storing it in a manner that it can be used in both the near and late future." He explains the idea that all societies and governments are structured around the ability to surveil its citizens and obtain their information. I agree with this idea and I believe it reaches back even further than recent history with the emergence of new technologies like Siri, Amazon's Alexa, and many more. An example of this that Dr. Guariglia mentions the invention of street addresses. Having a constant address to be able to find you at gives the government the ability to know where you are almost at any given time.

With this in mind, the reason I was so interested in this topic is that I believe that civic action and trust is a two-way street. As I have found in much of my past research the government's actions and decisions directly affect the publics' view of them and there are different instances or issues that elicit different responses from citizens the most. One of those issues that tend to pull constant outrage is the issues of government surveillance on the general public. We've met someone who is extremely wary of new technology because they believe that it is bugged and that there are other people or groups listening in. This is in fact true. Whether or not we like to acknowledge it or not there is constant information and data being collected on us at any given time either from government bodies or mass marketing or technology companies. This information can be used both positively and negatively. An example of positive uses is the use of

facial recognition software in police hands to aid in catching and charging criminals but even this can be used negatively. Specifically, it has been used in a bad way recently with the Black Lives Matter Protest all over the country. Many citizens who attended the protest found themselves wrongly arrested because their faces were matched to body camera footage of police at the protest. This allowed power abusing police to wrongly apprehend and charge citizens who were only expressing their 1st amendment rights. Instances like this and many more are why many US citizens dislike the use of surveillance software being used by the government to track them. Despite this issue stirring up such intense emotions, the federal government has done little in the way of passing effective legislation to prevent these misuses of the software. This angers many across the country and only contributes to the growing distrust and disappointment of the government.

In conclusion when I begin work on my original work and final project I will definitely look deeper into the use of surveillance technology and how its abuses are contributing to citizen distrust as well as try and find any either state or federal legislation that has been passed in order to prevent this abuse of power.