Opinion Piece

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Links

http://uberveillance.squarespace.com/blog/2015/9/15/in-the-night-garden

Abstract

Biometric recording and analysis as a function and feature of user engagement in children's games are now common and everyday. Corporations now routinely harvest user information to provide services and features that offer users a better experience or upgrades to their existing user experience. These electronic games are often networked and / or internet connected to data analysis services.

Article

So here we are in 2015, where one of the most respected and lead media agencies of Australia, the Australian Broadcasting Commission is encouraging children to switch their webcams on and record themselves to be alongside the characters "....not essential to the game but it allows you to enjoy an extra special experience."

Seriously?

If it wasn't that the fact that it is ABC app developers distributing the message I'm sure we would have the Australian Federal Police shutting it down and sending out a international trigger alert.
So let’s take a step back and revisit the case where Mattel thought it would be a great idea to build an SD camera into the womb or chest of a Barbie doll, USB plug in it’s butt and encourage kids to upload their lap play!


The post on this harks back a bit but it’s well worth revisiting what Associate Professor Katina Michael had to say at the time on the matter - [https://goo.gl/uYQP8W](https://goo.gl/uYQP8W)

Both cases bring some serious considerations to the forefront for debate and these could be framed within the socio-ethical context.

Did the developers at the time of bringing these inventions to the marketplace, for even a minute, consider building in socio-ethical reasoning, using an adaptive framework that is cross-cultural, contextual to thwart the release of these technologies that are obviously in breach or likely to be in breach of national or international laws?

For that matter, does it cross the minds of engineers in their race to realise the dreams of the science fiction writers dystopia, that there are children’s well being at stake here? Unlikely.

So let’s look at another case where this "load-your-yourself-for-further-fun' is occurring in other areas of the gaming world.
1 COIN(s) TO START

LIVE
Price $2.20
VIP $2.00
UP TO 2 PLAYERS CAN RACE!
SINGLE PLAYER AVAILABLE

Let's take your picture.
Namco Bandai Games Inc. has a similar such strategy employed on their sit-down car racing games that pepper many nations and entertainment venues.

The premise is that when you swipe your credit card to start the game it prompts you to use the accelerator pedal to "capture" a photo of your self seated, up close and portrait in style that is then loaded into the game interface as a player visual place holder. Each player is then able to "see" the others they are competing with on that bank of 5 gaming machines....but wait, there is more.

On the virtual car track there might be 20 or thirty cars racing around the track and each and every one of those cars also has images hovering above each car containing the facial features of children (players) who may have long left the game and in fact even left the premises. As you will see in image one (1) above I have depicted in true sousveillance style the general scale and composition as to what is captured of the player.

In the other photos you will identify children peering up into the camera which proceeds to take up to ten images at a time and then present them back to the player to select from.

In essence, the gaming machine is a networked device (internet enabled) that for all intents and purposes does nothing more than take a series of photos of the player and then they use that for the entertainment of the others seeing themselves and in competition racing against each other - literally.

It begs the question of the provider, summed up here as a series of questions unanswered:

- Where was the privacy declaration that childrens images were NOT being stored for the re-marketing of the game to players in new and prospective proximal, walk by marketing?
- Are images captured of innocent people who are captured amongst these high definition depictions of players seated used also and elsewhere?
- Are these games networked and the images being transmitted across the internet to other gaming machines and therefore peoples identity being used to market this and potentially many other products based on age, geolocation, facial identity and any number of other body sensing capabilities built into these machines?
- When the game is "over" can we then be assured as a consumer that our facial identity will not re-appear and be used for further marketing of the game?
In conclusion, we live in a society that has become accustomed to the unanswerable, where our basic rights as a human to feel our way forward using our instinct has been denied. Our proximity to everyday locations such as shopping centres have become a multiplicity of feeds, or re-picturing, of an imbued distrust of whereabouts never mind whom we are.

We have accepted that even a simple children's game is now potentially an identify harvesting activity and for the convenience we are promised upgrades and further levels of convenience.

The Australian Broadcast Commission has clearly a lot to answer to, but again, to what degree are such breaches of a socio-ethical consideration amongst those who would argue that it is a matter of socio-technical convenience, entertainment and choice that governs what is on-sold despite all the claims that "your data is safe with us".

Clearly, we are descending deeper into the night garden with it's myriad of murky monikers that evade ethical design and thwart useful privacy assured user interfaces.