Choose respect.

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You & everyone you know
Everyone else in the world
7.7 billion people
4.4 billion are online
Edges

“At the scale Twitter is at, a one-in-a-million chance happens 500 times a day.” -Del Harvey, Twitter

“If something happens to 1/1,000,000 users once per year, at Google that’s best expressed as ‘six times per day’.” -Andy Schou, Google

Expect human edge cases.
Respect

“Respect is a positive feeling or action shown towards someone or something considered important, or held in high esteem or regard; ... also the process of honoring someone by exhibiting care, concern, or consideration for their needs or feelings.” – Wikipedia

- Every human deserves respect.
- Failure matters because it affects humans.
Outline

1. Intellectually challenging
2. Emotionally challenging
3. Company challenges
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1. Intellectually challenging

2. Emotionally challenging

3. Company challenges
Build for humanity

- Understand and build for the people *affected by* your system, not just users
  - Example: Equifax. You didn’t need to know it existed to be affected.

- If you work on a big, influential product, more people are affected.
  - Effects can be mixed.
  - Example: ride-sharing apps have reduced drunk driving (in some places) but have other effects (e.g. accessibility, labour)
Why intellectually challenging?

- Humans are more complex than systems
- Different humans have contradictory needs and desires
  - Example: sharing real-time location
- Threat modeling all the way from humans and the societies they build down to the hardware
Example vulnerability factors

- Visible minority
- Invisible minority
- Gender
- Age
- Other identities
- Disability
- Poverty
- Abuse

- Target of generalized government action
- Target of specific government action
- Person with a secret
Example attacker factors

- Objective: commercial
- Objective: criminal
- Objective: political
- Objective: malicious
- Objective: chaos
- Personal vs. impersonal
- Primary vs. secondary

- Bonus features:
  - Advanced
  - Insider
  - Intimate
  - Power figure
  - Persistent
Example attackers

- Intimate persistent threats
- Advanced intimate persistent threats
- Untrusted roommate
- Employer
- Angry online attack mob
- Impersonal manipulator
- Suppressing political dissidence (targeted)
- Suppressing political dissidence (untargeted)
Example system areas

- Information sharing
- Authentication (and un-authentication)
- Authorization (system and models)
- Automated decision-making (correct and incorrect)
- Anti-abuse systems and their failures
- Where two systems meet
- System turndown
Outline

1 Intellectually challenging

2 Emotionally challenging

3 Company challenges
Why emotionally challenging?

- People will yell at you if they’re not happy
- No clear right answers
  - To make good choices, you have to understand how real people are being really hurt.
  - The future is even less predictable than the present.

Uncomfortable? Sit with that feeling

- You have to understand the impact to make good choices.
- And someone will make the choices.
It is messy, not pure

- Our community tends to prioritize purity: clean lines and maximum protection

- But “pure” choices may not serve humans
  - Example: encrypted computation may stand out to oppressive governments
Outline

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What if your company is getting in the way?

- Sometimes there are legitimate constraints
  - Example: More money, more user research, more development, etc.

- Sometimes the right answer is “don’t build that”, but often not

- ... and sometimes, your company is getting in the way
In the long term, respect wins

- Power governs much of how humans interact

- People will seek to level out structural inequality
  - In human societies: medieval carnival, sacrificial kings
  - Same holds for companies... thus the push to regulate the tech industry

“I want to build respectful systems. How do I make that happen?”
Help understand & prioritize

- **Option #1: Help your company understand and prioritize respect**
  - Tie what you’re suggesting to what an exec wants.
  - Quantify where you can.
  - Being demonstrably right leads to being trusted.

- **How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.**
  - In a big company, you usually can’t change everything at once.
  - Make something better. Get cheerleaders (especially execs).
Use your flexibility

- Option #2: Use flexibility to design & build better
  - Think about respect in small ways: “what if someone is unhappy about this recommendation?”
  - Also in bigger ways: “How can we adjust our business model to reduce the need for data?” “How can I make this real-time location sharing feature work respectfully in a world that includes intimate partner abuse and stalking?”
Vote with your feet

- Option #3: Vote with your feet. Use your skills to build respectful tech.
  - Hard choices ≠ not being able to make good choices.

- Most of us have choices. Choose to work on respectful systems.
  - Change projects. Change jobs.

- Good for you. Good for the ecosystem.
  - Management pays real attention to hiring and retention.
  - Make building respectful systems a competitive advantage.
Build for humans

- It’s not pure, it’s messy. But it’s all of our responsibility, including yours.
  - You can learn how intellectually -- think about real-world threats and ameliorations
  - You can learn how emotionally -- learn to make decisions in the presence of feelings of uncertainty and discomfort
- You can make these choices even if your company is hindering you
  - Help them understand and prioritize respect
  - Build better where you are
  - Vote with your feet
Stop failing.
Start building for humans.

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