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Abstract:

Intelligent personal assistants (IPA), such as Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant, are becoming increasingly present in multi-user households leading to questions about privacy and consent, particularly for those who do not directly own the device they interact with. When these devices are placed in shared spaces, every visitor and cohabitant becomes an indirect user, potentially leading to discomfort, misuse of services, or unintentional sharing of personal data. To better understand how owners and visitors perceive IPAs, we interviewed 10 in-house users (account owners and cohabitants) and 9 visitors from a student and young professionals sample who have interacted with such devices on various occasions. We find that cohabitants in shared households with regular IPA interactions see themselves as owners of the device, although not having the same controls as the account owner. Further, we determine the existence of a smart speaker etiquette which doubles as trust-based boundary management. Both in-house users and visitors demonstrate similar attitudes and concerns around data use, constant monitoring by the device, and the lack of transparency around device operations. We discuss interviewees' system understanding, concerns, and protection strategies and make recommendations to avoid tensions around shared devices.