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Internet Power and Social Context: A Globalization Approach to Web Privacy Concerns

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Abstract
Contemporary perspectives on the Internet don't recognize negotiations about its meaning that take place in many societies, causing the Web to be defined simultaneously in terms of local cultures and world markets. We propose a "globalization" perspective that can help researchers situate a society's cultural and technological practices within broad political and economic parameters, identify global forces and local voices, and study dynamics of their co-existence. As an exploratory foray, we compare U.S. and Israeli parents' attitudes toward Web privacy. The findings call attention to a need for historical and geographical considerations at every level of Web research.

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Internet Power and Social Context: A Globalization Approach to Web Privacy Concerns

Rivka Ribak and Joseph Turow

Contemporary perspectives on the Internet don't recognize negotiations about its meaning that take place in many societies, causing the Web to be defined simultaneously in terms of local cultures and world markets. We propose a "globalization" perspective that can help researchers situate a society's cultural and technological practices within broad political and economic parameters, identify global forces and local voices, and study dynamics of their co-existence. As an exploratory foray, we compare U.S. and Israeli parents' attitudes toward Web privacy. The findings call attention to a need for historical and geographical considerations at every level of Web research.

Many observers in the United States relate the adoption of the Internet to a sense of erosion in domestic privacy and parental authority. Numerous books, academic articles, public opinion polls, and press reports (as well as solutions and regulations) alert Americans to the allegedly inescapable consequences of the introduction of an additional eye (ear/mouth) into the home's technological environment (Andrejevic, 2002; Cai & Gantz, 2000; Shapiro, 1998; Turow, 2001). The tone of inevitability underlying the discourse about Web privacy in the United States implies that these concerns also carry over into other societies as the Web spreads across the world. Yet, while seemingly the ultimate metaphor of globalization, the Web is experienced locally by individual users embedded in particular families, cultures, and politics. In what ways, then, do users' approaches to the Web derive from their "indigenous" cultural construction of the machine? Where do they draw on U.S. values and fears, as embedded in U.S. cultural and technological exports?

Our purpose here is to suggest a framework for answering these questions by constructing the Web's global and local faces as a dialogue that is anchored within transnational political and economic bearings. By situating a society's cultural and technological practices within broad political and economic parameters, we can identify global forces and local voices, and study the dynamics of their co-existence. As an exploratory foray using this approach, we present a comparative survey of U.S. and Israeli parents' attitudes toward the Web and Web privacy. The survey highlights the cultural specificity of information disclosure practices but suggests, at the same time, that global influences may be at work. As constituted, the data do not allow us to causally tie these complex patterns to particular extra-national influences. They do, however, help define the areas in which these influences might be fruitfully explored in future studies, and they point out the usefulness of bringing historical and geographical considerations to every level of Web research.

The Need for a Global System Perspective

Accounts of the global spread of the Web have tended to adopt two contrasting narratives. According to the first, technology's inherent features spark the same opportunities and challenges and so, the same concerns and meanings, for users around the world (for an elaboration, see Buckingham, 2000; Fischer, 1992). The alternative narrative insists that

technology—both the hardware and the social meanings that are associated with it—is socially constructed (see MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999).

Works that adopt the first, essentialist/universalistic narrative, assume that technology affects people and societies in predictable and inevitable ways. Writing about privacy, for example, Garfinkle (2000) argues that "[t]echnology is not privacy neutral. The overwhelming tendency of technology is to out privacy. By its very nature, technology is intrusive" (p. 260). These works note that the Web's elementary hardware—computers, monitors, and network connections—can be seen everywhere one looks. The same holds true for the basic software—the browsers, search engines, chat rooms, and instant messaging systems that link millions of "surfers" worldwide. These works imply, therefore, that the whole world is exposed to *essentially* the same Web; and that effects, problems, and solutions inescapably derive from the technology, and are generalizable *universally* to virtually all locales. (see, for example, Cavoukian & Tapscott, 1997; for discussion, see Agre, 1997; Bennet & Grant, 1999.)

Relativist works, by contrast, suggest that although the telephone, radio, and television, for example, have distinctive technological features, the social meanings and controversies around these features developed over time through elaborate interactions among various constituencies, value systems, and regulatory regimes (Marvin, 1998; Rakow, 1992; Silverstone & Hirsch, 1992). From this perspective the fluid, multilingual, and radically interactive Web, in particular, subverts any attempt to construe it as a fixed entity, as it allows for and indeed cultivates intertwined and mutually-constitutive relationships between medium, text, and consumers/audiences/users (see, for example, Lyon & Zureik, 1996).

In this way, relativist works introduce users into the study of the human-machine interaction and position them as active shapers, decision-makers, and producers of meaning (e.g., Ribak, 1997). Significantly, they situate users within communities, in actual times and places (e.g., Bakardjieva, 2003; Na, 2001). Thus, arguing for the embeddedness of ongoing human-machine interdependence, Livingstone (1998) emphasizes the significance of sociopolitical and economic context in relation to an important project on "young people and the changing media environment in Europe" that she helped coordinate:

> Contexts of media use are elaborated…in two main ways. First, differences in social, cultural, economic and political structures both across and within European countries are likely to make a difference to children and young people's media use. Second, among western countries these structures are themselves subject to broader processes of modernization, processes which have particular significance for young people…To the extent that different countries represent different positions on these broad structural variables, including the diffusion find appropriation of media, comparative analysis offers a kind of natural experiment for explaining the meanings, uses and impacts of new media within each country (p. 445).

The Need for a Third View

The technological-universalistic and constructionist-relativist narratives of technological diffusion and globalization, of cultural adoption and localization, are clearly incongruent and indeed mutually exclusive. It is interesting, then, that what is common to both is a reluctance to situate the human-machine encounters they explore in the context of transnational political and economic relations that underlie these processes. Thus, where essentialist thinkers privilege the Web's global impact with little attention to local contexts, relativist and comparative analyses similarly overlook the interplay of the local with the transnational. Livingstone (1998), for

example, practically rules out a cross-cultural research design in which countries are structurally interdependent or disproportionately influencing one another when it comes to new media. She argues that "to make…comparisons [between countries] manageable in practice, the research should be restricted to modernized, western countries which are undergoing related sociopolitical changes; overlarge national differences would prevent observations interesting in one country being informative for another" (1998, p. 445).[1]

The upshot of this guiding principle is that the dominant interest in reporting the results of the European project is on cross-national comparison without cross-national influence. Thus, four of the five studies presented in a *European Journal of Communication* issue devoted to the twelve-country project headed by Livingstone (1998) treat the countries they compare as unrelated entities. They ignore the fact that many are geographically close to one another, many share languages and cultural products, and all belong to a European Economic Community that is developing pan-continental rules about electronic commerce, Internet privacy, and a host of other activities that affect life on the Web. The one exception to this hermetic approach (Lemish, Drotner, Liebes, Maigret, & Stald, 1998; see also Drotner, 2001) offers an account of globalization as a conflation of cultural practices. Yet it still avoids asking where the "global" originates, what forces lie behind its interpenetration of the local, and whether that interpenetration takes place differently in countries that have substantially different sociopolitical and socioeconomic environments.

The Utility of a Political Economy of Cultural Globalization

In order to account for users' cultural constructions of technology and to make sense of their specific ideas about Web privacy, we must contextualize technological development and human practice within broad economic and ideological parameters. Both software and hardware play a major role in today's international trade. The economic relationships that develop in the world markets for such information products recall the division of nations into a political hierarchy of core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral nations that Immanual Wallerstein and others have employed for analyzing international domination (Wallerstein, 1980; Skocpol, 1984). The model proposes that certain economic actors (predominantly corporations), based in a few core nations or regions, hold determinant influence on both the disposition and the effective operation, as well as the output, of less developed peripheral and semi-peripheral parts of the world. This, in turn, "enables the extension of the authority of the economic and social model" encouraged by the core nations (Gaspar, 1999, p. 3).

Recent writings on globalization challenge the construction of international economic hierarchy as an explanation for the colonialist shaping of social actions and attitudes. Placing caveats on such linear reasoning, they raise important questions about the nature and direction of ideological influence (see Curran & Park, 2000; Robertson, 1997; Sreberny-Mohammadi, Winseck, McKenna, & Boyd-Barrett, 1997). Appadurai (1996), for example, insists on the subversive, local, and liberating potential of globalization for diasporic ethnics around the world. But the emphasis on the democratizing potential of global access runs the risk of overlooking the political economy of power. Such perspectives may thus underestimate the role that economic domination emanating from hegemonic nations or regions plays in framing local cultural ideas about what a particular technology should "do," how it ought to be distributed and used, and to whom it ought to be sold.

In an attempt to develop an approach to media technology that is sensitive to the interplay between global forces and local appropriations, we suggest a political economy of cultural

globalization. Our perspective conceives of globalization as a dialogue between hegemonic interests and cultural practices, and uses the international economic and political power structure as a starting point for investigating transnational ideological influences. At the same time, it contextualizes and historicizes those local attitudes, practices, interpretations, and ideologies that assign culturally specific positions, roles, and meanings to technologies. As a result, it is attentive to the flows of influence from many directions, at many levels, and across time.

This dualistic approach is crucial when it comes to the Internet and information disclosure. By its very nature, the topic involves an intersection of global forces and local voices, technological facts and cultural choices. In political-economic terms, the Internet was developed at the core of the world system, among the wealthiest and most powerful nations. With significant European contributions, it evolved mainly in U.S. scientific establishments, originally for military purposes. Core-country corporate Internet leaders such as Microsoft, Intel, AMD, and 3Com subsequently situated strategic outposts in parts of the world that reflect different positions along an innovation/cheap-labor continuum: Some nations (e.g., Finland, Israel, and India) are relied on for their ability to contribute cutting-edge knowledge about hardware and software. Other countries (e.g. Indonesia and Malaysia) provide inexpensive, stable, and compliant manufacturing conditions. Independent firms in all regions vie to provide the large companies with component parts as well as to export their own innovations to Web-linked consumers (Kellerman, 2000).

What is especially interesting about these relationships is that firms based outside the core often find it most profitable to create software and hardware that do not necessarily speak to their own cultural, practical, and ideological concerns. Instead, they address their products to their most prominent markets (Arora, Gambardella, & Torrisi, 2001). Web privacy, security, and child surfing, for example, are topics that have generated huge investments by consumers and Web firms in the world's wealthiest regions. To participate in the revenues engendered by software and hardware tied to these concerns, industries at the periphery and semi-periphery of the western economy must keep up with debates regarding media policy and technological fixes that take place in front of U.S. regulatory agencies, the European Commission, and within English-speaking academic circles.

What are the implications of such globalizing tendencies for members of a non-core society when the values embedded in their major, core-oriented software and hardware exports do not resonate with their own local sentiments? For example, will members of a non-core society translate their traditional views on information disclosure into Web attitudes and practices even when they do not match the Web-privacy approaches that occupy global media and business interests? Such questions imply propositions regarding comparative research that are quite different from the ones that Livingstone posits about the comparison of equivalent, impermeable core countries. Here the emphasis is on sharply different socioeconomic conditions, on often-contrasting political and cultural circumstances, and, importantly, on international relationships and cross-influences.

The Case of Israel and the United States

A comparison of attitudes between Israelis and Americans on Web-related topics allows us to begin deciphering the interplay of technology, hegemony, and the local construction of meaning. The positions of Israel and the United States within the hierarchy of the global system are strikingly different. In contrast to the United States, a continent-spanning nation of more than 300 million people with a gross domestic product of U.S. $36,200 per capita, Israel, with about

6.4 million inhabitants, has a GDP of U.S. $18,900 per capita (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2002). Similarly, whereas the U.S.'s international economic and military influence places it unchallenged at the core of the world system, Israel may be considered outside that core. Despite the large share of knowledge-based export in its economy (Israeli Ministry of Finance, 2002) and in contrast to additional indicators of economic growth,[2] Israel's troubled borders and slate of occupation and the related military expenditure, as well as comparative measures of inequality (Adva Center, 2002) relegate it to an intermediate position in the world system.

In spite of this gap, Israel is increasingly linked to the United States by high-tech relationships. Many U.S.-based multinational firms—Intel, Cisco Systems, 3Com, IBM, and Microsoft—have established foreign subsidiaries and R&D centers in the country. Moreover, a large number of indigenous companies are competing with an eye to creating hardware and software that can serve security, privacy, networking, and broadband needs in the United States and elsewhere. The Israeli economy has been intent on satisfying U.S. and European demands for high-tech and often Web-related products. As the partner in a major high-tech venture fund noted *(San Francisco Business Times,* 2002), "Israel is a very export-oriented country (p. 37)."

A computer industry recruitment site aimed at English speakers (Hi-Link, 2002) exemplifies the two-way flow between Israel and the United States, suggesting that although exports throughout the globe are the goal, a U.S. frame of reference is dominant. In mid-2002, the site noted that "like other high-tech centers around the world, the high-tech industry in Israel is directly impacted by the stalled U.S. economy (p. 1)." Nevertheless, it pointed out, "with some one hundred (mostly high-tech) companies traded in the U.S., Israel is second only to Canada in terms of foreign presence on U.S. stock markets (p. 3)." Consequently, "with the establishment of many American subsidiaries in Israel and the development of the internet in English, your mother-tongue is definitely an asset (p. 6)."

The mutual Israel-U.S. interest that we identify at the corporate and worker levels is crucial at the level of management. Israeli executives keep their ears to the ground regarding social as well as technological developments in core regions of the world (especially the United States, Europe, and the United Kingdom) with an interest in capitalizing on the needs that arise in these potential markets. From pioneering Firewall security software in the early 1990s to recent encryption products that address recording conglomerates' problems with Web-based copyright infringements many home-grown innovations are heralded in the general Israeli press not for speaking to Israeli sensibilities but for expanding exports. Newspapers' financial sections provide their readers with detailed reports about U.S. regulatory and advocacy debates about the nature and right to information privacy as well as parents' concerns about keeping their children safe from objectionable content and predators on the Web. These developments come up in discussions of new product possibilities, in the coverage of Israeli privacy violations, and in the typical reporting that goes on about things American.

But the linkage with the United States is not limited to business interests. Growing fast, the number of Israeli surfers was a bit less than a third of the nation's homes in early 2002.[3] With relatively few sites in Hebrew available to them,[4] Israeli users navigate to U.S. sites and communicate through U.S. applications, using software and hardware that (wherever produced) map onto U.S. ideology in general and concerns about privacy in particular. Moreover, films such as *The Net,* which enact U.S. information disclosure nightmares, are frequent television fare. Prevalent, too, are magazine and newspaper feature articles that translate U.S. concerns into local parlance.

Israeli media have paraded U.S. concerns about digital information disclosure as at once prophetic of things to come and as being different and quintessentially American. The foreign accent of the coverage of privacy issues stands out both in the close watch reporters keep on privacy developments—technological, legislative, and regulatory—in the United States (and to a lesser extent, Europe), and in the breadth and depth of the analyses that they provide. This detailed complexity stands in a sharp contrast to the scarce reports on privacy issues in Israel. Few and far between, the local stories speak to the essential confrontation between regulators' efforts to introduce standards of privacy and common counter-arguments in the name of national security. The high-tech reporter of *HaAretz*, Israel's elite newspaper, opined that most Israelis have not considered Web privacy concerns as relating to their society. He added that the press' conscious U.S. orientation on these topics reflects a sense that American judicial and legislative activities raise interesting conflicts and issues that might stimulate thinking in Israel, where legislative and judicial awareness of this area is undeveloped (Y. Dror, personal communication, 2002).

The relative indifference to privacy violation that the press implicitly attributes to its audience is in fact in line with the collectivist strands of the country's founding ethos. Israel was established on an explicit socialist ideology in which individuals were firmly situated as members and partners in the project of nation-building (see Ben Raphael, 2000), rather than lone adversaries of big government and centralized power. The country was, and arguably still is, a "recruited society" (a nation in arms, see Kimmerling, 1993; Kimmerling & Moore, 1997) in which the boundaries between the self and the collective, between personal needs and desires and national imperatives and objectives—and thus, between on- and off-stage and between public and private life—are difficult to outline. Further, while the country has witnessed strong pulls toward privatization and individualization during the past decade and a half, recurrent national threats appear to strengthen Israelis' commitment to the collective and reduce whatever centrifugal tendencies they may have temporarily entertained. Thus, when 15-year-old Ofir Rahum was kidnapped and murdered by a Palestinian woman he met through the ICQ instant messenger (just 2 weeks before the Israeli survey), newspaper coverage adopted the conventional framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict. References to the danger of information disclosure on the Web were overwhelmingly subordinated to the discourse on national security.

Structurally, too, personal privacy is treated differently in Israel from the U.S. Unlike Americans, Israelis must carry an official picture identity card. While an American driver's license and social security number may seem comparable to the Israeli ID, symbolically and functionally they are profoundly different (Etzioni, 1999). Israelis' ID numbers identify them in most of their encounters with both government and non-government institutions (for example, medical and university authorities), and citizens over 18 are required to carry the card at all times; the use of the social security card, on the other hand, is legally, normatively, and practically restricted, while the driver license is, by definition, voluntary. Israelis cannot (or find it difficult to) reinvent themselves due to both the close watch of the Ministry of Interior (and the ID it issues) and the country's size; Israelis know each other. Related to that is the fact of the army. While the myth of universal draft is no longer sustainable, it is nonetheless the case that by the age of 18, every Israeli youth can expect to be called by the army for pre-military examinations and checks. The results of the tests form the basis for the personal file that will accompany him or her in the years to come.

Focusing on Israeli society alone, we might expect that these particular local circumstances would directly influence Israelis' attitudes about Web privacy. Yet, as we have

seen, very different perspectives on information disclosure in relation to the Web appear on Israelis' media radar screen in discussions of U.S. (and, to a lesser extent, other international) business concerns and social reports about the Internet. To what extent, then, do Israelis translate their relative tolerance for information disclosure offline into their computer privacy practices? Do they follow the hegemonic preoccupation with the Web's (inevitable) information leakage? Do they develop a construction of the Web that reflects their traditional information disclosure practices, or are these global and local influences blended in some way? In an attempt to gain initial insight into such intertwined transnational cultural interrelationships, we compared U.S. and Israeli views on the Web, gathered in surveys on Web attitudes that were conducted in the United States and in Israel.

The Surveys

The U.S. survey was undertaken in early 2000 (Turow & Nir, 2000a, 2000b), before this comparative investigation was conceived. That survey was a follow-up to a study conducted by the second author in 1999 (Turow, 1999). The study was the first academic exploration of U.S. parents' attitudes and reported activities regarding the Web as it related to their children. One aim of the 2000 survey was to track differences from the previous year's findings regarding what parents were generally thinking and doing about the Web. To do that, the survey presented parents with 14 statements about the potential benefits and harms of the Internet for children, which were asked in the original survey. It asked parents how much they agreed or disagreed with each of the assertions along a five-point scale, from agree strongly to disagree strongly. The survey's second aim was to explore an emerging issue. As teenagers were becoming major users of the Web, commercial sites were increasingly gleaning information from them for marketing purposes. The 2000 study asked how parents and youngsters (teens and tweens, a marketing term for 10-12 year olds) conceive of releasing information to Web sites and, if they regarded it as a problem, whether they wanted anything done about it.

The survey addressed the concern about the Web and the leakage of family information through 14 statements about privacy and the Web. Parents and youngsters were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with each of the assertions along a similar 5-point scale. Also included were scenarios aimed at comparing what the youngsters say would be acceptable for teens to reveal to Web marketers as compared to what their parents say would be acceptable for teenagers to reveal.

Although the questionnaire was not created for use in cross-national comparisons, we realized that a Hebrew translation would offer a unique opportunity. For researchers interested in the cultural construction of the Web, it could provide an exploratory window on the extent to which parents in two countries have similar strong beliefs about the technology's benefits and problems. And, from the specific standpoint of developing a political economy of globalization, we could note where Israeli respondents located themselves, when it comes to the Web, along the range between specifically “Israeli” and mediated “American” attitudes to information privacy.

Roper Starch Worldwide conducted the research for the Annenberg Public Policy Center. Telephone interviews were conducted with a nationwide cross-section of 1,001[5] parents of children 8- 17 in homes with Internet connections. The Random Digit Dialing (RDD) sampling methodology was used to locale respondents. During the interviews, parents were asked to answer questions while thinking about their child aged 8-17, who had the most recent birthday. When the child the parent had focused on during the interview was at least 10-17 years old, an

attempt was made to also interview that child. When that child was not available, another 10-17 year old child in the household was interviewed. Approximately half of the 304 children 10-17 year-olds that were interviewed were selected from the same households as the parents. The other half of the children's sample (for which parents were not interviewed) was located using the Random Digit Dialing (RDD) sampling methodology. All the interviews were conducted January 13 through February 17, 2000. Interviews with the adults averaged 20 minutes and the ones with the kids averaged 10 minutes.

The Israeli interviews were conducted by the Machshov survey firm one year after the ones in the United States (January-February 2001). The RDD and interview procedures used were the same as in the earlier study.[6] The comparison, then, is between random samples of 1001 U.S. adults and 304 adolescents, and 1000 Israeli adults and 305 adolescents, who lived in households with online computer access and at least one child between ages 8 and 17. This paper, however, will focus on the parents' responses.

The Survey Findings

The two samples of adults were similar on a number of basic demographic variables. In each sample, 41% of the respondents were male and 59% were female. The vast majority of each group (83% of the Americans, 85% of the Israelis) were employed. Similarly, around half of the parents (57% of the Americans, 55% of the Israelis) were aged 30-44; almost all the rest (33% of the Americans, 44% of the Israelis) were aged 45-59. Most parents in each sample were married, though the proportion of married Israelis (92%) was higher than the proportion of married Americans (79%). Similarly, 50% of the Americans and 45% of the Israelis had college or post-graduate degrees.

It is impossible to know, of course, whether the similarities in these labels actually mask major cultural differences in what the labels mean. Certainly, the presence of two very different societies came through in the absence of “race” as a relevant category in Israeli society and its replacement by “country of birth” and “country of father's birth.” In the same vein, answers about “household income” point to a very different scale in the two countries, as Israel's average income is substantially lower than that of the U.S.

In fact, the Israeli survey firm did not consider it appropriate to ask the American income question, which directly solicited the parent’s family income bracket. Instead, the parent was told that the net average household income in Israel is 8,000 New Israeli Shekels and asked to state whether his or her household income was around that average, a lot or a little lower, or a lot or it little higher. Only 10% responded that they fell below the average, while 57% said they rose above it—an indication, albeit indirect, that the sample was substantially wealthier than the nation as a whole. The more “direct” U.S. question was elusive in its own way: Since 26% refused to report their yearly income, it allowed even less inference about the online families' socioeconomic standing. Those who did answer, however, reflected a group that was only somewhat wealthier than the nation as a whole.

Against this backdrop of similarities, differences, and the ambiguous meanings of both, one major difference stood out immediately between the two samples in relation to use of the Internet: While 94% of the U.S. adults said that they had personally used the Internet, only 64% of the Israeli adults reported that. Clearly, a much higher percentage of Israeli than American parents had bought the service for their children only. Among the Israeli adults who did report getting on the Internet, the perceived sense of expertise was similar to their U.S. counterparts (see Table 1).

Table 1
Length of Home Online Connection and Perceived Expertise, Parents of Children Aged 8-17**

	U.S. Parents (N = 1001) %	Israeli Parents (N = 1000) %
Length of Online Connection At Home		
Less than six months	15	12
Between six months and a year	18	18
More than a year, but less than two	21	15***
More than two years	46	39
Don't know	0	1*
	U.S. Parents (N = 1001) %	Israeli Parents (N = 686)* %
Ability to go online or navigate the Internet		
Beginner	24	28
Intermediate user	42	36***
Advanced user	22	25
Expert user	8	11
Don't know	4	2

*These represent the Israeli parents with home Internet connections who say they have personally used the Internet. When the numbers don't add to 100%, it is because of rounding error. *** Indicates that the difference between the parents is statistically significant at the .01 level using chi-square.

Nevertheless, that a third of Israelis with the Web at home weren't users at all might suggest that these Israeli nonusers' privacy attitudes should properly be compared with Americans who don't have the Web in their homes. The 1999 study comparing the attitudes of U.S. parents in households with computers but with and without the Web at home found that the latter were somewhat more negative about the Web's ability to improve their children's lives. The 1999 study didn't plumb privacy attitudes, but it did lead us to wonder whether Israeli parents with the Web at home who have never used the Internet would be more concerned about privacy than those who have had direct experience with it.

Table 2 presents the responses to statements about the Web of all the online U.S. parents, all the Israeli parents, the online Israeli parents who have used the Web, and the online Israeli parents who have not used the Web. Overall, the differences between the Israeli groups are small and not significant statistically.[7] By contrast, the differences between the Israeli and U.S. samples are substantial as well as statistically significant.

The answers from the U.S. and Israeli parents to the 14 statements about potential benefits and harms of the Web reflect very different mind-sets about the Web. U.S. parents hold strong opinions about its effects. Large numbers believe that it is a useful and even critical component of a child's education, and large numbers believe, often at the same time, that it gives youngsters access to content with “troublesome” values. Substantial percentages of Israeli parents, by contrast, are much more skeptical of the technology. They don't believe the hype about its advantages and they don’t accept the rhetoric about its dangers. Twice as much as U.S. parents, however, they worry about their ability to help their children navigate the new technology.

For example, while 74% of U.S. parents agreed or agreed strongly that "children who do not have internet access are at a disadvantage compared to their peers who do have access," only 23% of Israelis answered that way. In fact, on all of the "positive" statements about the Web, U.S. parents were far more likely than Israeli parents to agree or agree strongly. U.S. parents were far more prone to say the Web is a safe place, that it helps their kids with homework, that their children discover "fascinating, useful things," and that it can help them "learn about cultural diversity and social tolerance."

Israeli parents also tend to be mellower about potentially negative effects of the Web than are their U.S. counterparts. Almost half (46%) do express concern about the Web's ability to interfere with family values—around the same percentage of U.S. parents expressing the concern. Yet substantially smaller percentages of Israelis than Americans are concerned about the possibility of bad effects of specific Web content. Almost twice as many U.S. parents as Israelis (59% vs. 31%) agreed or strongly agreed that "going on line too often might lead children to become isolated from other people." Similarly, 72% of U.S. parents were concerned over exposure to sexually explicit images on the Internet, as compared to 28% of Israeli parents; 62% of the U.S. parents, and 31 % of Israeli parents were concerned over exposure to violent images. And, while 741% of U.S. parents reported that they were "concerned that children give out personal information about themselves when visiting Web sites or chat rooms," only 24% of Israeli parents agreed.[8]

Israeli parents did say in substantially higher proportions than their U.S. counterparts (48% to 26%) that they "often worry" that they won't be able to explore the Web with their children as well as other parents do. That about half of Israeli parents had such a feeling of deficiency is interesting in view of the Israelis' self-evaluation of Web expertise, which was similar to U.S. parents, and their overall mellow altitude to Web effects. At the same time, Israelis' expertise with Web marketers was admittedly relatively limited. Only 25% of them, as compared to 60% of the Americans, reported that they have read Web site privacy policies more than once or twice. Moreover, 53% of the U.S. sample indicated that they bought something over the Internet, compared to only 30% of the Israelis.

We wondered whether these countervailing tensions that didn't show up nearly as much in the U.S. parent population—mellowness versus a felt deficiency, general expertise versus specific inexperience with marketers— would translate into clear cultural differences regarding the teenagers' release of family information to marketers. What we found was more complex than these straightforward differences. On the one hand, a clear majority of both Israeli and American parents reflected the kinds of information privacy concerns that the Israeli press had, in fact, continually discussed as American internet privacy issues. On the other hand, the Israeli parents did diverge strongly from their U.S. counterparts along cultural lines with respect to naming who has the responsibility to try to solve these privacy problems.

Responses on Information Privacy

When it comes to the kind, of information parents say are acceptable for teens to give to Internet marketers, the differences between Americans and Israelis seem to be a matter of degree rather than of kind. As Table 3 shows, Israeli parents were consistently more likely to agree that it was acceptable for a teenager to release certain types of information to marketers in exchange for a free gift. Yet for most categories, the percentages of both Israelis and Americans agreeing about the giving out of data were well under 40%. Moreover, about the same small percentage of

Table 2
Perentage of Parents Who Agreed Strongly or Somewhat with Positive and Negative Statements About the Internet

	U.S. Parents (N = 1001) %	Israeli Parents Who Have Used+ (N = 686) %	Israeli Parents Who Have Not ++ (N = 314) %	Total Israeli Parents (N = 1000) %
P— Access to the internet helps my children with their schoolwork	89	17	19	17*
P— Online, my children discover fascinating and useful things they never knew before	85	10	11	10*
P— Children who do not have internet access are at a disadvantage compared to their peers who do have internet access	74	22	25	23*
N— I am concerned that my child/children give out personal information about themselves when visiting web sites or chat rooms	74	26	19**	24*
N— I am concerned that my child/children might view sexaully explicit images on the internet	72	30	22	28*
N— I am concerned that my child/children might view violent images on the internet	62	30	23	31*
P— The internet can help my children learn about diversity and tolerance	66	18	17	17*
P— People worry too much that adults will take advantage of children on the internet	59	19	19	19*
N— Going online too often might lead children to become isolated from other people	59	31	29	31*
P— The internet is a safe place for my children to spend time	51	24	28	25*
N— Families who spend a lot of time online talk to each other less than they otherwise would	50	42	39	42*
N— My children's exposure to the internet might interfere with the values and beliefs I want to teach	43	46	41	46
N— Children who spend too much time on the internet develop anti-social behavior	41	40	37	39
N— I often worry that I won't be able to explore the web with my children as well as other parents do	26	50	44	48*

+ These are parents who have Internet connections at home and say they have used the Internet. + + These are parents who have Internet connections at home and say they have not used the Internet. *Indicates that the differences between the U.S. and Israeli parents are statistically significant at the .01 level using chi-square. **Indicates that the differences between Israeli parents are statistically significant.

parents (24% of U.S. and 20% of Israeli parents) said they themselves would answer a variety of personal questions to marketers in exchange for a free gift when it was given a cash value. Clearly, then, Israelis' traditionally tolerant attitude toward information disclosure did not show through strongly here. Most people in both parent populations were uncomfortable about themselves or their offspring confiding family information to marketers.

Table 4 reflects these differences in degree but also indicates key differences that distinguish the Israeli from the American perspective on Web information privacy. The table notes the percentages of Israeli and U.S. parents who agreed strongly or somewhat agreed with 14 opinions about privacy. The table indicates that Israeli parents tended to be generally less concerned than U.S. parents about Web privacy considerations regarding themselves and their family. At the same time, for many of the statements, the gap in perspectives between the two populations wasn't that great (not exceeding 10%).

Answers to several statements do, however, suggest that major cultural differences between the U.S. and Israeli respondents are also at work. According to one finding, more American than Israeli parents (60% to 37%) confirm that their concern about Web privacy has increased since going on line. Another finding indicates that substantially more American than Israeli parents admit being nervous about Web sites having information about them (72% to 52%). A third finding suggests one reason for the lower percentage of Israelis compared to Americans: A far smaller segment of the Israeli parents (54% to 31%) knows that Web sites collect information about them even when they don't submit information. The dissimilar answers to these statements imply that although Israeli and American parents profess concerns about information privacy, the Americans are more engaged than the Israelis with concerns about the Web and how to deal with them.

Table 3
Percentage of Parents Who Feel it is "Completely OK" or "OK" for Their Kids to Give This Information to a Web Site for a Free Gift

	U.S. Parents (N = 1001) %	Israeli Parents (N = 1000) %
Give out names of his or her favorite stores	44	60*
Give out names of her parents' favorite stores	33	50*
Give out whether his or her parents talk a lot about politics	25	38*
Give out how many times his or her parents have gone to a place of worship in the past month	25	35*
Give out whether he or she has skin problems	24	20*
Give out what types of cars the family owns	21	34*
Give out what he or she does on the weekends	19	33*
Give out how many days of school he or she missed in the past year	19	32*
Give out whether the family drinks wine or beer with dinner	17	36*
Give out how much allowance he or she gets	17	28*
Give out whether he or she cheated in school during the past year	16	30*
Give out whether his or her parents have skin problems	16	19
Give out whether his or her parents speed when they drive	14	24*
Give out how many days of work his or her parents missed in the past year	10	23*
Give out what his parents do on the weekends	10	25*

*Indicates that the difference between the parents is statistically significant at the .01 level using chi-square.

Additional divergences in the answers between the two groups suggest that when it also comes to responsibility for knowing about and acting on issues of Web privacy, Israeli parents depart from their U.S. counterparts in kind, not just degree. The first three statements in Table 4 reflect differences in what might be called a *locus or privacy responsibility.* An overwhelming percentage of Americans agreed or strongly agreed that parents (first statement), government (second statement), and business (third statement) ought to be deeply involved in ensuring a Web safe from teens' disclosure of information. Israelis, by contrast, were much less invested in the responsibility of any of these entities. The differences are particularly stark if we look specifically at the percentage of parents who agreed strongly with them. Agreeing strongly implies a certain high concern about a policy issue; simply agreeing does not. We found that only 18% of Israeli parents, compared to 53% of the U.S. parents, agreed strongly that they expect businesses to help them with privacy—that they "look to see if a Web site has a privacy policy before answering any questions." Moreover, while 88% of U.S. parents agreed strongly that "I should have a legal right to know everything that a Web site knows about me," only 43% of Israeli parents felt strongly about it. Similarly, 84% of U.S. versus 43% of Israeli parents agreed strongly that "teenagers should have to get their parent's consent before giving out information online."[9]

These differences in the locus of responsibility also translate into different practical conclusions that U.S. and Israeli parents draw from their sense of growing privacy exposure. While a large proportion (47%) of Israeli parents compared to U.S. parents (10%) note that one of their children has "given out information he or she shouldn't to Web sites," only 4% of the Israelis (compared to 19% of the Americans) have installed filters to try to keep some control over the sites the teens can visit—even though one third of the Israelis (and 78% of Americans) say they have heard of filters. This contrasting attitude toward a parent-initiated technological fix was even more striking when we explained the functions of filters and monitors to them and asked them, "If someone offered to help you put an internet filter or monitor on your computer for free, would you want the filter, the monitor or both?" Whereas 82% of the U.S. parents wanted one or both of these devices, only 43% of the Israelis did.

Conclusion

This exploratory cross-cultural comparison has yielded patterns of difference and similarity that speak to both the cultural construction of privacy (and technology) and the political economy of globalization. The responses by Israeli and American parents reveal very different perspectives on the Web's power and the locus of responsibility for controlling it. We noted that Israeli parents are much more skeptical than their U.S. counterparts about the transforming possibilities of the Web: They don't buy the hype about the Internet's advantages, and they don't accept the dystopic rhetoric about its dangers. In comparison, the answers of the American parents stand out as almost frantic over the impact of the Web (positive and negative) on their family lives.

Israeli and U.S. parents also don't see eye-to-eye when it comes to important aspects of domestic privacy and the Web. Far more American than Israeli parents say that their concern about Web privacy has increased since going online. Far more Americans say, too, that they are nervous about Web sites having information about them. Israelis also don't have nearly the commitment the Americans have to parental, governmental, or business solutions to Web privacy problems. They seem, instead, to feel that teens themselves should shoulder the burden of policing the borders of privacy.

Table 4
Percentage of Parents Who Agreed "Strongly" or "Somewhat" Regarding Privacy Statements

	U.S. (N = 1001) %	Israeli (N = 1000) %
Teenagers should have to get their parent's consent before giving out information online.	96	80*
I should have a legal right to know everything that a Web site knows about me.	95	71*
I look to see if a Web site has a privacy policy before answering any question.	72	46*
I am nervous about Web sites having information about me.	73	52*
I am more concerned about giving away sensitive information online than about giving away sensitive information any other way.	63	50*
My concern about outsiders learning sensitive information about me and my family has increased since we've gone online at home.	59	37*
I worry more about what information a teenager would give away to a Web site than a younger child under 13.	61	61
When I go to a Web site, it collects information about me even if I do not register or fill in information about myself.	54	31*
Web site privacy policies are easy to understand.	41	38*
When a Web site has a privacy policy, I know that the site will take proper care of my information.	41	32*
I sometimes worry that members of my family give information they shouldn't about our family to Web sites.	36	41*
I trust Web sites not to share information with other companies or advertisers when they say they won't.	37	29*
I like to give information to Web sites because I get offers for products and services I personally like.	18	29*
I will only give out information to a Web site if I am paid or compensated in some way.	9	19*

*Indicates that the difference between American and Israeli parents who agree *strongly or somewhat* on the statement is statistically significant at the .01 level using chi-square.

Seeing these differences side-by-side underscores the constructed nature of the Web. To explain them, one can point to the traditional Israeli commitment to the collective over the private and to the continual sociopolitical tension that naturalizes and renders acceptable the violation of privacy by the government and military. The United States, by contrast, has created a

hallowed position for individual privacy, though in ideal more than in practice. In the words of a *New York Post* commentator, "Americans don't like invasions of privacy, be it internet-, health care- or financial-related" (Lambert, 2001, p. 62). The disjunction between what Americans believe ought to be and what government and business often refuse to allow creates social tensions through which public advocacy groups try to force those institutions to create solutions. Government and business, by contrast, often reply by thrusting the responsibility for protecting privacy back to the hands of individuals and parents. That may lead to the tripartite solution that the survey uncovered among Americans, but not among Israelis.

This model highlighting local cultural constructions of the Web and Web privacy does not, however, fit all our data. We found that a clear majority of Israeli parents set aside their society's customary laxness over information privacy and agreed with American parents about the importance of not disclosing information to the Web. The great percentage of parents in both societies acknowledges being uncomfortable about themselves or their offspring confiding even rather superficial family information to marketers. Israelis' concerns mirror the American worries that they had seen and heard through a variety of print and electronic media channels, including a U.S.-centered Israeli version of the Web.

The similarities and differences imply that a complex dynamic is at work. The findings indicate that cross-cultural influences are intermingling with local cultural constructions to form a peculiar mix, neither American nor fully continuous with the Israeli "indigenous" tolerance for disclosure. We suggest that exposure to U.S. Web issues on Israeli media along with export-minded discussions of U.S. high-tech throughout society are leading Israeli parents to adopt Web-privacy worries that do not resonate with the nation's traditional privacy practices. Yet when it comes to the more profound step of actually *acting* on these issues—deciding if government or business or parents should take responsibility for preventing information disclosure—traditional Israeli perspectives on privacy do transfer to the Internet.

These explanations clearly need to be investigated further. What we have as a result of this research, though, are sharp indicators that a complex combination of forces is shaping Israeli responses to the Web and strong possibilities that some of those forces originate outside Israeli society. Comparative surveys across time can help us explore how much, how, and exactly why Israeli society is becoming more "American" in its attitudes toward the Web as Israeli business and media continue their Americentric scripts when it comes to high-technology. Comparative field research is also necessary to understand the actual ways that parents in the two societies approach the Web on the ground. How they are changed, by how much, and what resistance there is to "imported" views, are topics that require work both within and across portions of the global system.

The argument that some influences on Web attitudes reflect the global political economy even while other influences are local is a position that society-specific cultural accounts often ignore. Our framework and comparative survey findings suggest that, instead, it is a direction that needs to be explored. The challenge for researchers—particularly when it comes to countries outside the center or the world economy, but also in relation to those in it—is to continually relate people's altitudes, actions, and interactions to the national and global sociopolitical system. That, metaphorically and practically, is what "the Web" is really about.

Notes

[1] This theme is developed in the volume that concludes the project; see Livingstone el al. (2001), pp. 11-12.

[2] About one quarter of Israel's export income consists of high-tech products (see Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002), Israel leads the world In the number of scientists and technicians m the work force, with 140 per 10,000 (as opposed to 60 in the U.S., over 70 in Japan, and fewer than 60 in Germany). The percentage was augmented by the massive influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, which included a large percentage of scientists, engineers, and technicians. See Hi-Link (2002).

[3] That is a high proportion among the world's countries but still considerably smaller than the approximately 50% of the U.S. homes. This estimation is based on TIM-Teleseker poll data cited in Barabash (2001) and Central Bureau of Statistics (2002), plate 2.1 b.

[4] The Hebrewization of Internet tools (e-mail, Web etc.) is astonishingly slow, suggesting both the extent of English usage by Israeli surfers, and their readiness to shift to English when using this medium.

[5] The sampling error for percentages based on the entire sample of 1001 parents is approximately plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. The sampling error is larger for smaller subgroups within the sample.

[6] Although the Israeli study was conducted a year later than the U.S. survey, we have no reason to believe that societal or technological changes would have caused the U.S. parents' responses to have changed during that time. It also bears noting that the two samples of parents' responses to the same questions in the U.S. 1999 and 2000 surveys were strikingly similar to one another.

[7] Differences between these two groups of Israeli parents were also generally not statistically significant with respect to the variables in Tables 3 and 4, so we do not present them.

[8] One finding did seem to diverge from Israeli parents' mellowness: Although 59% of U.S. parents believe that “people worry too much that adults will take advantage of children on the internet,” only 19% of the Israelis agreed with the statement. One reason for the higher percentage not willing to write off concern about adult exploitation might be the highly publicized Internet-related kidnapping and murder of the Israeli boy that look place two weeks before the survey. Press coverage might have been fresh in the minds of many of the respondents, who may consequently have interpreted *taking advantage* as meaning physical danger. The answers to the other statements show that the majority of online Israeli parents seems not to have generalized its worry about the physical danger of adult exploitation through the Web to other areas of potential concern.

[9] All these differences were statistically significant at the .01 level using chi-square.

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