Can Your Brain Be Hacked? The Answer May Surprise You

August 4, 2016 - Regardless of how vulnerable is when it is stored on a computer, the vast majority of people would agree that your private thoughts are your own. While that may currently be true, researchers at the University of Washington have just proven that it is possible to manipulate the human brain electronically. In other words, they are hacking the human brain and they are doing it without any invasive surgery to implant an interface on the brain.

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s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';
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The technology and methods used by researchers involved in the study is actually pretty crude. But it is also off the shelfâ€¦ meaning that current technology allowed them to conduct their experiments. No need to develop anything new. That's somewhat frightening when you consider that computer processor power is doubling every 18 months. It won't be long before these same researchers will be able to develop more sophisticated methods.

What Washington researchers did was use visual stimuli to make a man move his arm. They used a computer brain interface - of the same type used with some disabled patients - which is worn by a study participant. That participant played a computer game. Subliminal messages were inserted into the game. An example of this might be a brand name that is flashed onto the screen quickly. Every time one of these subliminal messages appears on the screen, the computer interface records the brain wave patterns of the person playing the game.

In this particular case, the researchers were trying to see if they could get use the information they received by monitoring the subliminal information to later force that participant to move his arm. Not something that most of us would be worried about. If you look at the video below, you'll be able to see that they were successful.

But the researchers are worried. They are concerned that the methods they used could also be used by marketers to manipulate purchases. Or they could be used by hackers to manipulate unsuspecting victims into committing criminal activities. They are also concerned that their methods could be used to get victims to turn over large amounts of their personal information. The potential ramifications are astounding.

There is very little doubt that melding computer technology with the human brain can provide huge benefits to society. The potential is there to help paralyzed patients walk again. Or to help those with degenerative brain diseases such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease. But this technology also has the potential to do great harm; both to individuals and society in general. And right now, there are no laws that regulate its use.

It is time for congress to start looking at these issues seriously and to begin the process of designing a regulatory framework. That framework should encourage continued development in this promising field while at the same time protecting the privacy of consumers. It should also make it illegal to use this technology to promote goods and services that are for sale. Here is the video.

byJim Malmberg
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