

Melody Cabanellas

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Ethics Response Paper

Privacy is very important and is a major concern when it comes to adapting with how the world changes and technology advances. Technology has advanced and is so prevalent that it has become a major part of people's daily lives. When it comes to privacy, it matters what information is stored, how it is stored, why it is stored, and who can access that information. Even if there is good intentions in collecting and storing that private information, data breaches do occur and it is the public that suffers as their information is stolen or at risk.

The mishandling of privacy can easily spark outrage among the public, as seen in the 1960s-1970s when the U.S government wanted to pass bills that would allow for data collection of each citizen under a unique personal ID. The public was angry as they felt the government was overreaching and stepping over the boundary of their control during a time. This brings another important aspect of privacy, that the person whose data is being collected has the ability to give consent to that collection and is able to trust that it be protected. In order to gain back trust among the citizens after the scandals of Watergate and COINTELPRO, the Privacy Act of 1974 was passed (Office of Privacy and Civil Liberties). This established that in order for the citizen's personal data to be collected, the individual has to know, give consent, and be able to access the records pertaining to them. Those records would also need to be legally collected and authorized to be used for intended purpose.

It has been argued that the government has the right to know the information of citizens when it concerns illegal acts committed by those individuals. However, it is paramount that the government follows the legal process in order to be kept in check and that the trust boundary is not violated. If the government no longer follows those legal procedures, then the government

should not be allowed to continue to collect and view the private information of its citizens. Another case of the government breaching the trust would be in cases where the data is collected but not made public. For example, the job reports were not published during the government shutdown. This is important information that affects citizens, and it is due to the government's failings that citizens are not able to data that involves their information. If the government can access the information of its citizens, that same access should be allowed to the citizens. If that cannot occur, then the private information of the citizens should be held a priority and the government cannot be beholden to it. Data collection is good when the procedures are followed and citizens are able to access the results of the data collection. The analysis of private personal data is important as it promotes studying the causes and effects of certain issues and solutions can be applied and observed.

Information is valuable, not just when it comes to government use as businesses also are able to collect personal information. It has become a requirement for customers/users to sign-up and create accounts using their private information. This increases the chance of individuals' private information to be exposed as it provides more access points. Social media has allowed for people to post their daily lives and privacy has become harder to protect. Even if a person never posts on social media, it is easy for someone else to record them and post online without their consent. Generative AI has also become more widespread and presents another danger to individuals' privacy, as people have used the photos they posted to generate new ones without their consent. This is why policies, laws, rules, or even just etiquette is important to protecting privacy and only works if it is adopted by at least the majority.

This can be seen with governments around the world trying to regulate the type of information that children post or access online by having features like age verification. It is not

just new laws being made, but also amendments to existing laws. Such as the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, which now "explicitly includes biometric identifiers such as fingerprints, retina and iris patterns, voice data, and facial data" (GovFacts). This shows how privacy laws and policies need to adapt as technology advances. It is important that the private information of children is protected, as once their information is online it is exposed and cannot be completely removed from the internet. The same goes for the private information of adults. This is why preventative measures must be in place before it becomes an issue.

However, those measures should also be carefully analyzed so that the solution does not create more dangers. This case can be seen after Discord's age verification failure, as there was a data breach which resulted in the private information like government IDs, being stolen and no longer in their control. With laws requiring age verification it removes the ability for individuals to remain anonymous. If anonymity is removed, then the private data collected must be securely protected. When failures to keep that data secured occur, it is up to the entity that collected and stored that data to notify and compensate the individuals based on how damaging it can be.

Privacy is a concept that constantly changes and is all the more important as technology is advancing faster than policies and laws can be passed. There are many areas like government overreach, company's, social media, etc; where an individual's privacy can be at risk of being mishandled. Individuals must be able to trust that their private information is collected responsibly, stored securely, and used transparently. As technology continues to be a part of daily life, preventative measures, ethical practices, and adaptive laws are essential to ensure that privacy remains a right that individuals have. That their information will be in their control and they have the ability to know and consent what their information is used for.

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