

04.01- Individual Systems Theory and Ethics

A retailer selling your personal information to others for profit...

Systems → Ethical Quandary ↓	Customers	Data Sellers	Data Buyers	Consumer-C ompany trust	The Public
Release of personal data.	X	X	X	X	X
Data possibly getting into the wrong hands	X		X	X	X
Not being upfront about collecting user data.	X	X	X	X	
No right to be forgotten in US	X		X	X	X
Lack of Transparency with customer	X	X		X	

With regulation I think data collection could be completely ethical, but I feel as if companies too often cross into unethical territory when handling consumer data. Companies collect and store a large amount of information about customers in their databases whether they plan to use it for themselves, or sell it off to other companies for profit. If a user agrees to have their data collected and sold it is obviously hard to say it is unethical, but that is rarely the case. Too often we see companies hiding their unethical practices in the “fine print” leaving many customers clueless to what companies are actually doing behind the scenes. Oftentimes the line is crossed when companies explore data that necessity does not dictate and/or not at all limiting the distribution of said customers data. It is not hard to imagine a situation in which a person’s data could hurt them if the wrong company had access to it. For example if a company were to identify a customer as someone of a particular political group, religious standing, etc. this could

lead to discrimination based on those particular values. Adding insult to injury once something is online it is almost impossible to be forgotten. Unlike the EU, the US has no legislation intact that gives an individual the right to be forgotten so companies are not bound by law to delete the data that you give them. A step in the right direction would be companies being upfront with customers about their data policies and how that company owning your data could affect you individually.