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Privacy and Anonymity Ethics Paper

Today, we live in a technology dependent society that has expanded our daily lives and infused internet and gadgetry into our daily routine. Consequently, privacy is now such a fragile and valuable thing that is constantly being threatened by the advancements that we continue to make with technology. "Privacy is an important right because it is a necessary condition for other rights such as freedom and personal autonomy. There is thus a relationship between privacy, freedom and human dignity. Respecting a person's privacy is to acknowledge such a person's right to freedom and to recognize that individual as an autonomous human being" (J.J Britz).

When thinking in terms of the computing field, privacy cannot not be confined to terms of control or restricted access because privacy based on technological advancements is largely outside of the people's control. Today's technological resources largely help others to obtain information that they were not consented to have and therefore throws out the idea of control and access. Also, there are many situations where people have no say in the information that they are forced to surrender. The concept of privacy involves so many factors, including feelings of safety and trust, consent of disclosure, awareness, etc. Privacy is about more than just the information being protected, but could also be about the conditions leading up to the act of designating privacy. Within those circumstances, I believe that the definition of privacy is more complex and multifaceted than what is in someone's own control.

While privacy will continue to be a subject of debate with no consensus on a definition, we must still reflect on the responsibility of computing professionals to ensure ethical standards are being met when concerning privacy. "The responsibility of respecting privacy applies to computing professionals in a particularly profound way. Technology enables the collection,

monitoring, and exchange of personal information quickly, inexpensively, and often without the knowledge of the people affected. Therefore, a computing professional should become conversant in the various definitions and forms of privacy and should understand the rights and responsibilities associated with the collection and use of personal information" (ACM Code of Ethics).

People are constantly relying on computing professionals; therefore, we must take high regard to privacy legislation and conform to computer privacy laws as they are essential to ensuring that performance is done in the interest of people's welfare. Thus, "Avoiding harm begins with careful consideration of potential impacts on all those affected by decisions. When harm is an intentional part of the system, those responsible are obligated to ensure that the harm is ethically justified. In either case, ensure that all harm is minimized" (ACM Code of Ethics). A good example to consider would be one of the latest innovations known as the Apple air tag tracking device. While it is a fascinating new product, it has turned out to be a major privacy concern and has already proved to be a potentially dangerous device that will inevitably continue to lead to targeted victims and invasion of privacy. In this case, the effects and possibilities of releasing this new software should have been more carefully considered, and probably should not have been formulated and released, since the harm it has and will continue to bring outweighs anything else that could come from it. Consequently, with newly evolving technology and increasingly accurate precision, we must closely consider potentially harmful effects and keep in mind the ways that intellectual property may be used in ways that are detrimental to others.

Even in times of inopportuneness and strife, computing professionals should strive to "perform due diligence to ensure the system functions as intended, and take appropriate action to secure resources against accidental and intentional misuse, modification, and denial of service"

(ACM Code of Ethics). Thus, working without cutting corners and doing everything we can to ensure safety and confidentiality for the consumer.

Anonymity in the context of protecting someone's identity for security purposes is an important component of privacy. And although the opportunity of anonymity can be misused, we must still preserve it for the sake of those that truly need it. The right to privacy must not be taken away because of the bad actions of a few. There should be ways to preserve privacy for those that need it and intend for it to be used for genuine purposes. But for those situations where it is impossible to discern between honorable intentions and harmful ones, we must continue to protect the innocent and their right to safety and privacy.

Works Cited

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