Ethics Paper - Brian Hinkle

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<div align="center">The Importance of Privacy and Anonymity</div>

We live in an age where most communication happens online. Not only communication but learning too. Lots of activities individuals participate in nowadays involve some kind of interaction with networks online. Our society widely accepts this lifestyle most of us have adapted to and often take it for granted. But what happens if your information online gets acquired by someone with bad intent. It is not a situation many people come to consider, but ought to, for there can be very detrimental results. Privacy and anonymity is a very crucial part when it comes to securing data or identity. It is very important to keep in mind if your sensitive data is exposed. According to Moor and Tavani "the concept of privacy itself is best defined in terms of restricted access, not control" (Tavani & Moor, 2001). This definition does a great job of showing that privacy can help prevent unauthorized users from getting into sensitive information. Anonymity is important too as it allows one to not be traced when certain actions are taken online. But is privacy and anonymity important among individuals? Is it something to worry about as an individual? Or does it only become important when brought to a larger scale? And if it is important, how do privacy and anonymity play an important role when it comes to our everyday lives?

As one could assume, individuals have at least some form of privacy online and by default, everyone does to a certain extent. Most services require that to use their website, you

must set up an account requiring you to also set up a password. It serves a a security

measurement for the user so that they can be worry free when utilizing their service. Now as this

is a no brainer for most, it is important to make note of the idea that privacy exists for everyone

as long as they are utilizing services (ie. Gmail). But privacy and anonymity online goes way

further than this. Just because data in different services are "protected" using username and

passwords, doesn't mean it is one-hundred percent secure. Aside from the obvious fact that

passwords can be hacked if they are weak, other methods exist to get them, such as keylogging.

Keylogging usually comes from installed malware on the computer and will track keys that are

pressed on your keyboard. Having an antivirus software installed on your computer can prevent

keyloggers.

  So how important is privacy and anonymity among individuals? This is a question that is

not a hard answer, but rather is more general, since it is not the case that everyone uses the

internet an equal amount. Most people normally go about their everyday lives without the

thought that their actions online can be tracked. It is a situation that is not often taken seriously.

At a service level, it is important the majority of the time since you store data (ie. messages)

associated with your account, but at an overall web level, it is not crucial for most individuals.

From personal experience, I know that having the ability on Firefox to go incognito at the school

library's computers has helped keep my username and passwords secure when signing into

services like Gmail, Blackboard, and Google Drive. Doing this ensures that no entered

passwords or usernames are saved in the browser's cache or cookie data. Other than this type of

privacy, it is often not considered to take any extra measurers among most individuals. However,

for companies with large scale data structures, it is important to keep an eye on threats from

online activity and breach of privacy. Maintaining a secure database with stored information requires many security precautions.

Although privacy and anonymity is great for keeping data secure, it can also be used with malicious intent. Privacy anonymity provides leverage to the malicious since it can cover their tracks. It is often used among hackers and others who intend to harm a certain individual or organization, whether it is for personal gain or not. It is usually used among people who intend to do illegal activities, such as money laundering, drug trading, terroism, and identity theft. Privacy and anonymity among this group of people is used as a layer of protection to ensure no one can trace back to the person who performed the illegal act. This is a problem the US has faced before. Past laws however have been put in place to monitor individuals' activity online, to ensure any illegal actions can be intercepted before completed. One example of such a law is the Patriot Act to prevent terroism.

Privacy and anonymity is an important concept to keep in mind when on the internet, as it allows people to secure data and information they value. When data exists on the internet, there is always a possibility it can be accessed by someone who was not intended to access it. Taking security precautions such as installing anti-virus software and creating strong passwords can decrease the chance of unwanted individuals accessing your personal data. Even though data security is not as high of a priority for individuals as it is for large scale data centers, it is still important to be aware and take these common security precautions as it may save you from personal data breaches or identity theft.

Works Cited

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