

Shivam Bansal

Caitlin Post

ENGL 182

February 12, 2020

### Big Data, Big Problems (Revised)

**Background:** The big tech having enormous user data has been a huge issue in the past few years. But have we ever wondered what is the alternate? As we saw from the Netflix Price Contest paper that user data could be used to build recommendation systems. Subsequently over the decade, the value of data across internet has increased multifold, as we have realized the power of data in combination with machine learning and other AI algorithms, can improve our lifestyles in the future in unimaginable ways. These improvements are such as self-driving cars, enhanced health care, home security, smart homes, digital personal assistants, and many other things which would be elemental for human success. With such technology coming up with existence of enormous data to sustain it, the future looks very bright for the earth, obviously ignoring environmental concerns. Though possibility of enormous batteries (Thanks to Elon Musk) and shift towards renewable energy might save the earth. In such a case, future is expected to be very tech dependent changing our lives in incredible ways. Two decades from now, our whole life would be dictated by tech around us.

Currently, the big tech companies are researching and investing into AI softwares and machine learning, from where the demand of data mostly arises. And some of those companies have access to enormous amounts of user data which have been turned into proprietary data by them. We can say our data is mostly being used to train machine learning algorithms and improve other AI applications. Afterall, our data is not of that much value to

us individually because neither do we have collective data, nor do we possess complex algorithms which could make use of it. Everyone would agree that there is a greater purpose to our data, but tech companies betrayed their users in the way they obtained the data. That mere Terms of service tick-box, ticked by everyone and read by none: That's where you gave away the rights of your data. That was tech companies taking advantage of the less informed public. And availability of such data with proprietary rights, opens up negative ways to use the data such as tracking.

**Claim:** As we realize that big tech is not using our data justly and will profit multifold in the future using our data, there will be laws and protocols made up to control our data rights. Several self-sustaining alternate models could come up in the near future with the use of blockchain and cryptocurrency. One way or the other, our data (or at least most of ours) will continue to be used for technological advancement. In my project I am going to explore some alternate models we could see come up, and possible implications and conclusions of various scenarios.

### **Counter Arguments:**

- 1) **Some could argue that the data which Big Tech collects from the user is a form of payment from the user in exchange of free services.** I do not agree with this as users signed up to use the app and not be abused by data breaches. As they signup to use the app, they should be able to trust the application with their personal data, as exchange of data is a required part of the service. Moreover if users stopped using these services, Big tech is likely to pay users for their data as the real value of data is a lot more than what a user would expect it to be, as it is imperative for future innovation.

## 2) If data helps with innovation, why not let Big tech do the innovation for the world?

Big Tech consists of private corporations whose only purpose is to sustain long term profits. These companies will always engage in what is most profitable for them in the future. The software and technologies they build from stealing people's data, will be sold at exorbitantly high prices to them only, in the future. If it was a non profit society collection our data for innovation, it would be totally acceptable. But people should never trust corporations blindly.

**Stakes** (why does this matter and for whom?): This is a subject of concern for all the internet users across the world. They deserve the right to decide how their data should be used and by whom. And if used, how they are compensated.

**Structure:** I plan to start with a very clear introduction and background about what situation we are currently in. And then I intend to present 2 to 3 different models which could be possible alternatives. The structure would begin with explaining the problem in detail as explaining that is the real task for an ordinary reader. Further on, I will focus on explaining my model.

**Genre and Mode:** I plan to write an academic paper as this is a topic which I need to explain in a lot of detail while providing all kinds of background information. In some cases, I might even have to discuss related topics to explain the context to the reader. Academic Paper would be the appropriate genre as it would allow me the means to explain things in detail while referring to other academic papers explaining background topics.

**Target Audience:** People curious about data rights and tech in future. Could include all sorts of students interested in modern issues. Hence, I will keep the language simple and use design elements which could explain my viewpoints with clarity to the broader audiences.

**Sources I intend to work with:** I intend to read academic papers surrounding different blockchain models to study more about models possible. I will also read other people's ideas about how this could turn up and build on their ideas. I also plan on using sources to explain a bunch of background topics involved. Some of the sources I am currently looking at are:

**How Big Data Can Fuel Bigger Growth. Accenture.**

[https://na.eventscloud.com/file\\_uploads/006832b470b7dbe3ff0b3fc885fb4b7b\\_bigdata.pdf](https://na.eventscloud.com/file_uploads/006832b470b7dbe3ff0b3fc885fb4b7b_bigdata.pdf)

**Charles Babcock**

Data, Data, Everywhere

<https://www.informationweek.com/data-data-everywhere/d/d-id/1039328?>