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Policies on privacy and anonymity continue to be debated as the digital landscape evolves with the emergence of technologies and government intervention. There are a number of benefits to keeping personal information private and anonymous on the web. The benefits of privacy are challenged by corporations and government agencies' actions of collecting data on individuals without consent. Although corporations make use of the data they collect to offer better services and products, they have little regard for the individuals' interests. Individuals would be concerned about information security and how much information they are actually collecting. Since these corporations often do not secure information securely, they misuse the information or give it to other corporations. The benefits of data collection does not outweigh the rights of the individual's consent towards their personal information. Privacy and Anonymity of individuals should be protected and can only be disclosed voluntarily by the individual.

There must be greater regulations on corporations and government agencies to disclose the amount of information they are collecting. Many individuals are concerned about the extent to which their personal information is being collected without consent. The ACM Code of Ethics is a great guideline for these regulations, as it describes data collection. "Only the minimum amount of personal information necessary should be collected in a system. The retention and disposal periods for that information should be clearly defined, enforced, and communicated to

data subjects.”(ACM). Data from individuals should only be collected when necessary and with consent from the individual. Companies use various tactics to collect information from users and hold onto it for extended periods of time. User agreements are a method to get the user to give up data, but vaguely state what is being collected and how they are using the information. Users are not aware that companies are collecting more data than necessary. The action of misleading is not ethical as corporations are misusing the trust of their users. The companies go a step further and use the data for other purposes besides the product/service that initially collects the data. Looking again at the ACM code of ethics, it states, “Personal information gathered for a specific purpose should not be used for other purposes without the person's consent.”(ACM). The unethical practices of companies are a clear indication of the need for greater regulations on the disclosure of data collection to protect users.

The benefit of anonymity and privacy on the web is the protection of individuals, and it must be maintained. Anonymity can provide protection by allowing individuals to speak out against injustice without repercussions. Another way individuals can utilize anonymity is to seek support from others if they are part of a marginalized group without opening themselves up to dangers. Privacy can also protect individuals by preventing information from being accessed by malicious actors. The recent laws and stances of some governments that require identification to use the web threaten anonymity and privacy on the internet. These actions destroy the previously mentioned benefits of anonymity and privacy while introducing more dangers. Companies holding individuals' personal information is dangerous since there have been data breaches. Requiring an identity to be tied to accessing the web just adds more information at risk and

allows malicious actors to more easily acquire everything about an individual. These dangers are why anonymity and privacy should be protected and maintained on the web.

The exploitation of anonymity and privacy in cyberspace can be combated without the removal of anonymity and privacy. Exploitation of anonymity can be done by posting harmful information, inciting violence, or conducting illegal activities. Websites can self regulate what's posted and actions done on their website to prevent harmful activities without needing all users to give up anonymity. There are many tools websites can use to monitor and regulate posts, such as various software, including emerging AI technology, a dedicated staff, and even the community can be enlisted to regulate harmful activity. Removing anonymity and privacy entirely just causes more dangers to individuals in an attempt to prevent some other dangers, which is not really a solution.

The individual holds the rights to their anonymity and personal information; no benefits outweigh these rights, which is why anonymity and privacy on the web should be protected. The protection of individuals is more important than the ability of corporations to improve a service/product. There may be dangers to anonymity, but there are solutions that create fewer issues than removing it entirely. It is not ethical to infringe on privacy since it causes potential harm to those individuals whose data is at risk. For that reason, data collection by the government and corporations should be disclosed to the individual so that they understand the exact extent of what is being collected from them. The individual must know the extent so that they may decide whether or not they feel comfortable sharing that data. Since the individual holds the right to their own personal information availability to others.

Works Cited

“ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.” *ACM*, www.acm.org/code-of-ethics. Accessed 30 Nov. 2025.