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Freedom of Expression and Privacy in the Digital World

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I'm scared about my future in this country. As a first generation to refugee immigrant parents, I have always been very self-aware. The way many of my peers see security as a afterthought, and the diminishing rights to freedom of expression. I've been recently asking myself two things. Is there a limit where technology becomes no longer ethical, and are you proud to be an American.

Freedom of Expression

When it comes to the topic of communication platforms there is a variety that I use throughout my day. My primary form of digital communication is the Messages app in iOS. This app contains a subsection of message services such as *RCS*, *SMS*, and Apple's own *iMessage* services. Within Apple's terms and conditions, it states that children, spam protection and law coordination are the general policies to ensure the safety of the user. As for the services itself SMS and RCS do not contain end-to-end encryption, while Apple's iMessage does. I use this service the most as the majority of family and friends have an Apple product that can send and receive data. It is the easiest platform to set up and handoff between my Apple Watch, MacBook, and iPhone to make those services consistent and dependable. I believe Apple as a company has a better public reputation verses Google and Meta when it comes to data protection and privacy. So, to an extent I do believe their policies are being followed and correctly implemented. Now there is a grey zone with crime and those factors are based off severity. Apple may still comply by handing over iMessage, SMS, and RCS data to the authorities as stated in the terms and agreement. Since I do stay up to date with most tech related interests, I will also mention that since Apple is now creating their own chips. This means their M Series chips contain their own neuro engines for onboard data encryption and security. Meaning regardless some information cannot be accessed by Apple.

Personal Information Online

I am going to continue using Apple as the primary company for this topic. Think about it, many tech companies seek to do what Apple has done. Create a solid ecosystem where every device is easily connected. Google has tried with their services like, GoogleOne, Drive, YouTube, Office, and Android OS. The issue is though I believe people forget as much as Apple will preach about their privacy goals, they are a for-profit business bottom line. Going more into depth let me explain what you are giving your data to while you are immersed in the ecosystem. Apple Music and Apple TV+ are their streaming services, they still need to pay their artists and make a profit, and this means data collection to target you artists suggestions and trends. *Apple Card, which can help you save but measures your spending and purchase habits. (2)* Apple Education services and partnerships in our public/private institutions. They need data collection to target the best profitable markets for them. Based off their policies Apple claims that they collect minimal data, they do not sell like companies such as Google and Meta and only saves minimal data for law enforcement. Apple's reputation for consumer data protection is much more praised compared to their competitors. *In fact, in 2016 there was a case where the DOJ needed to unlock the iPhone belonging to the San Bernardino shooter Farook. They refuse to comply with the FBI stating that it would be an overcite and they protect the data of their customers. (1) There* are various built in encryption features in iOS that also reaffirm how I feel, even a feature called *Advanced Data Protection (4),* which locks your device down to a point where Apple can access nothing. When we are talking about digital privacy and communication there is realistically only so much the user and company can do before the data becomes too limited and restricted. The bottom line is that we are the ones who have the decision what product and service to use so regardless you must abide by the company rules.

Concerns About Online Presence

I would like to believe that because I am tech savvy, I understand data privacy and I take more precautions than the general person, but I am human too. Like many Gen Z, I am guilty of using the same passwords, not enabling 2FA, oversharing information. I try to follow the saying I learned in finance, "Never put your eggs into one basket." If one becomes compromised, then all of your data is at risk. Digital footprints are real, and they can be used to track anyone. The larger issue at hand is that the general public is not cyber knowledge aware, but that is more fault of our declining K-12 Education systems. From my own firsthand experiences, the people around me many do not follow the recommended security practices. If I am sending files to my parents using messages or airdrop, and their devices are not updated then a hacker could potentially steal the data I am sending. There is a hand full of people I know that follow, "if It isn't broke, don't fix it." So that being said people will not update their devices or use safer methods/practices. Whatever we do online the government is always watching, data collection is power and that is why anything you delete on the internet never truly goes away. Those are the unofficial terms and conditions you accept living in the US and using the internet here.

The bottom line is that I believe that we are very privileged to be American. It's unfortunate that with that privilege we are using it for the wrong reasons such as greed, power, and selfish reasons. We the people have the power to change regulations and fix things no matter how complex the world is. With that power we can regulate companies and pass laws to keep security in check.

Citations

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