Performing ethics is a process in which one rationally examines all the factors surrounding a problem to understand what may have occurred, to whom blame must be assigned and possible solutions. There are six main factors that can be further broken down into narrower subgroups. The main questions that one can ask when rationally examining an issue are who, what, when, where, how and why? In the technology world, the who usually means people such as the owners, the lawyers, the workers, the victims, the whistleblowers, and other people who may be involved. The what refers to any problems or solutions that are being examined. The when refers to the timeline of how the events occurred and who participated in them. The where is usually in reference to the countries or locations that the problem started and the location it affected. The how refers to which technologies were used and finally, the why refers to the motivations behind the issue. Technology companies and advocates often claim that the goal of technology is to improve people's quality of life. Quality of Life encompasses "person's physical wellbeing, material wellbeing, social wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, and development and activity." So one way to rationally examine this claim to understand the who which are the technology companies, advocates, consumers, and users. The what is whether technology improves quality of life. The when can be this year or the past ten years depending on the exact case. The where will be a country such as the US and varies on a case by case basis. The how depends on what aspect of quality of life we are trying to measure such as mental wellbeing. Finally, the why refers to why technology companies make this claim and why consumers might believe it.

Carneades.org in the video, Ethics vs Morality, explains that morals are the personal values of right and wrong of an individual. Ethics are the societally agreed up rules of right and wrong. Sometimes, the moral values and the ethical environment expected of the individual might be in conflict. For example, if a person, suppose they are a judge, believes that killing in any circumstance is a crime. They might still encounter cases where they must give someone that death penalty. In this case, the judge might have to confront personal turmoil. There are many different ethical frameworks that describe how one determines right from wrong or determine how one must act. Hank Green in the video, Aristotle & Virtue Theory: Crash Course Philosophy #38, explains that Virtue Theory, developed by Aristotle, says that everyone should try to be virtuous. Virtue is never specified because virtue will change depending on the situation so the only way one can learn to be virtuous is to learn from virtuous people (Green, 2016). Hank Green in the Utilitarianism: Crash Course Philosophy #36, states that Rule Utilitarianism is a philosophy which pushes people to always choose the path that leads to the greatest good for the largest amount of people. No individual is greater than the group and so every individual should strive to do what is best for the largest amount of people (Green, 2016). In computer science, virtue theory would mean that a robot shopkeeper reports a crime if candy was stolen by a criminal but would let the crime go if the crime was committed by an orphan child who hasn’t eaten for two days. Similarly,
using the rule utilitarianism philosophy, one can argue that an AI should in an accident situation be always programmed to hit the least number of people.

In the United States of America, the First Amendment guarantees the freedom of speech. As explained in What Does Free Speech Mean to USA Courts? Freedom of speech gives citizens the right to not speak, the right to protest, the right to some offensive words, the right to contribute money to political campaigns, and the right to advertise with some limitations. However, freedom of speech does not mean a person can say whatever without any consequences. For example, the first amendment does not protect those who incite violence, develop or distribute obscene materials, destroy military draft cards, and advocate illegal drug use at schools. Research is based on the sharing of knowledge. Counterintuitively, however, many journals are also closed access. This means that one must pay these journals to access the latest research. Jeremy Chan writes in AI Researchers Boycott Nature Machine Intelligence Journal that one of the latest journals to become closed access is the Nature Publishing Group’s Nature Machine Intelligence. However, many machine learning and artificial intelligence researchers decided to boycott the journal for being closed access. Professor Dietterich from Oregon State University argued that closed access journals will take the machine learning community a step backward (Chan, 2018). He urged other researchers to also boycott and instead submit their works to open access journals to support freedom and the right to public access and education.

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that can affect people from around the world because the internet is everywhere. Claire K. Hall writes in Cyberbullying in College that bullying was often seen to be the problem of high school students but with the internet cyberbullying can affect anyone. Cyberbullies, in college, often use social media as their main tool to perpetrate their actions. There are six types of cyberbullying. These are flaming, exclusion, harassment, cyberstalking, outing, and masquerading (Hall). Flaming refers to attacks containing harsh words and/or pictures that happen on public online spaces. Exclusion is when a person is singled out and are ignored or commented upon nastily. Harassment is when one bullies attack one target person. Cyberstalking is when the bullies gather information about one person and follow them around. The outing refers to when a bully releases a victim’s personal information usually relating to sexual or private information and makes it public. The masquerading is when a bully creates a fake identity and anonymously harasses victims or impersonate the victim.

Cyberbullying has led to many deaths in this country. For many others, it has caused an immeasurable amount of pain and suffering. However, it is often heard to find the bullies in cyberbullying cases and the victim may never get justice. In the article Cyberbullying pushed Texas teen to commit suicide, family says that about a year ago, a high school girl in Texas killed herself due to cyberbullying. It was reported that the bullies used an untraceable application to harass her. They also created a fake Facebook page of her which was another medium that they used to bully her. The bullies mostly targeted her weight. They would post pictures of her, say she was offering free sex, and make her phone number public prompting calls. Even though, she and her family complained to the school and law enforcement, no permanent solution was found. Brandy Vela killed herself with a gun after sending an email and text to her family. After her death, her family
has started the process to ensure they are stricter and more long-lasting consequences for cyberbullies.

It is important to learn how to evaluate the sources we get our information from. This is particularly true for news and media organizations. Some of the organizations have a blatant bias and engage in propaganda strategies to justify the news organization’s existing biases. Vanessa Otero in a Media Bias Chart ranked news organizations based on their biases and reporting styles. Some of these biases are well known in popular media and the news organizations have often been mocked for their practices. For example, Jon Stewart, would often mock Fox News for having a blatant right-wing agenda. Stewart would also poke fun of CNN, a news organization that often provides more opinion-based reporting rather than plain facts. President Obama also joked about this at his last correspondents’ dinner when he remarked that “Jake Tapper left journalism for CNN”. Tapper previously worked for ABC News, a news organization that is very neutral and more fact based. In the image provided in the text, we see factual data supporting these long standing view of news organizations. When reading the news, it is important for the readers to be able to analyze, theorize, and understand why the news maybe presented in a certain way. Democracy requires the common people to remain skeptics and the inability to dissect ulterior motives can lead to fake news, propaganda, and fascist regimes.

The headlines for Associated Press and Reuters are more factual compared to the Top news headlines that are sensation and aim to catch one’s eyes. However, the Associated Press and Reuters do not have as many technology-based news as Fast Company. Barabara Ortutay in the Associated Press article Facebook to invest $300 million in news, focusing on local reports that Facebook will be investing three hundred million dollars in the next three years into local new organizations. The company hopes to create a subscription model and use these local news organizations for third-party fact checking (Orutay, 2019). Membership and revenues of local newspapers are falling Facebook is partly to blame. Facebook claims it want to help local organizations transition to this new online economy. Recently, Facebook has been facing a lot of hot press for being unable to create fake news on its platform. It removed the “Trending” feature after backlash emerged of its possible role in the 2016 U.S Presidential election. So, Facebook is trying to find new methods it can start to integrate news into its platform again. This maybe one potential pathway they are exploring.

Another good source for neutral fact-based technology news in Bloomberg. Bloomberg is known to be a business news organization. However, most technology companies are also business so anything that may affect business and markets will be prioritzed in Bloomberg. Sarah Frier wrote in a Bloomberg article, Snap Finance Chief Stone Quits After 8 Months; Shares Drop that the finance chief of Snap Inc, i.e. the parent company of Snapchat, quit. As a result, the shares of the company dropped. This is a clear example of how a large technology company or technological decisions can affect markets and businesses. It is also an important development that investors should be aware of. As a result, they will be prioritized at Bloomberg. Bloomberg describes itself as a newspaper that is focused on business so their main focus is not a secret. Therefore, Bloomberg
will be a good news source to add to the Smart News app if one requires a good news source for business focused developments.

from Chapter 2 Discussion: Speech, Censorship, Cyberbullying, and Media Bias. - Group C

Jan 18, 2019 7:03pm

Hema Susmita Padala

Hi Ethan,

Thank you for your thoughtful response. You bring up a very valid concern about privacy in the technology world. DJ Pangburn in the article, A lawsuit would reveal how the Trump administration spies on Social Media reports that a lawsuit was filed by the ACLU which says covert internet surveillance has been done by the FBI, ICE and other immigration and homeland organizations. Palantir is one of the companies that supplies software to ICE. ICE has even noted that "to query the system for information that supports its civil immigration enforcement cases (Pangburn, 2019)."

It isn't just that government regulatory bodies are moving slowly but sometimes the government is complicit in acts of privacy invasion. Most people in the government also do not understand technology and the change of technology that well. Even more importantly, privacy violations in the social media age are not just a concern limited to one country. It impacts everyone in the world and therefore I believe this should also be a concern for an international body such as the United Nations.