

**Is Your Face Really Your Own?**

**By Judy May** July 19 at 3:00 PM

In a world that is growing more and more reliant on technology, our personal lives and privacy may no longer be quite so private. Businesses and government agencies are now able to employ facial recognition to help in solving crimes, finding missing persons, and many other noble feats, but how far could this expand?  There are many aspects of our individuality and personal lives that are currently protected in some form by law, but with the rapid advancement of facial recognition, there are not yet laws protecting individuals from improper use of the system. In fact, improper use of the system does not yet have a hard definition. Will our rights be broken? In recent years, we have learned about many aspects of technology that have been used in detrimental ways, or at the very least, ways that make citizens feel uncomfortable. Though many articles show the positive sides, it is easy to see how companies could use this identification system against individuals in many ways. What negatives could result from this system?

In the early days of facial recognition algorithms, back in the 1990’s, there were already many obvious uses for the system (Teicher, 2018). The military, who began the design process, would be able to use the system to identify criminals in ways never known before. It could even use it to help identify individuals on bases to make sure they were not attempted infiltrators. Facial recognition has advanced greatly, and it can now be used to help identify criminals or missing people if there is a lack of genetic evidence in the case. Police forces are a major supporter of facial recognition. In fact, law enforcement agencies have facial recognition records for one in every two adults in America (Garvie et al., 2016). Though there are multitudes of positive uses in the criminal defense arena, we are now seeing facial recognition being used in many other ways. Facial recognition allows people to unlock their phone simply by looking at it. You can even image search someone’s face on the internet to determine who they are almost instantly (Teicher, 2018). Where else could this go? Most likely, there are many pieces of technology in the works to make our lives easier, but how many could have a negative impact, and in what ways? Teicher discussed a project with Egor Tsvetkov, in which Tsvetkov was able to compile photos he took on the metro and matched up to the individuals’ names and social media profiles. This example shows that this recognition system is versatile, but also easily accessible which could lead to improper use.

What aspects of facial recognition is improper? It is virtually impossible to avoid being placed in this system, but does an individual have a right to avoid being put into this system? People could be uncomfortable with a lot of personal information out there, but many companies use these cameras to video and photograph individuals without their knowledge or consent. These companies, government agencies and big corporations use them for safety purposes, so it is unclear as to whether people should protest or not. Currently, there are 16 states that actively allow the FBI to use facial recognition technology to use state issued ID, such as driver’s license photos, to identify suspected criminals. At minimum, 26 states allow their state law enforcement agencies to search within their databases (Garvie et al., 2016). Unfortunately, the general public is currently being kept in the dark about the stretch that these technologies may have.

Currently, there are a lot of unknown aspects of facial recognition databases. The importance of studying them and learning more about their uses is becoming more and more apparent. Whether these systems are being utilized for positive or negative reasons, the citizens of this nation deserve to know and understand the way their faces are being used by these algorithms. Even if it is simply to bring an ease of mind, these people should be able to know if their faces and identities are being used, protected, or simply compiled. A person’s identity is very important to them, and I feel that enabling the common citizen to understand this process will help build a more positive relationship for our nation with technology. Understanding what your information is being used for could help individuals feel much more comfortable with its collection and use. I understand the importance and key uses of this technology. It has revolutionized the way we identify individuals in so many important situations. However, the entities utilizing facial recognition need to be more transparent with the capabilities and uses of these systems.

Teicher, Jordan G. “What Do Facial Recognition Technologies Mean for Our Privacy?” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 18 July 2018, [www.nytimes.com/2018/07/18/lens/what-do-facial-recognition-technologies-mean-for-our-privacy.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/18/lens/what-do-facial-recognition-technologies-mean-for-our-privacy.html).

Garvie, Clare, et al. “The Perpetual Line-Up.” *Perpetual Line Up*, Georgetown University, [www.perpetuallineup.org/](http://www.perpetuallineup.org/).