

An examination of the community and moral challenges faced by uber

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Technology has taken over the lives of Americans. Though there is a large amount of benefits due to modern advances in technology, many disadvantages have taken precedence in recent news headlines. Uber for example is being questioned lately because people are unsure if it is ethical to hold Uber responsible for the illegal activity now being associated with the app. Although Uber is commonly seen as a convenience, Uber users are trading safety for those minor conveniences.

“ For the women and men who drive with Uber, our app represents a flexible new way to earn money. For cities, we help strengthen local economies, improve access to transportation, and make streets safer. When you make transportation as reliable as running water, everyone benefits. Especially when it’s snowing outside” (Finding the Way) This is a quote directly from “ The Uber Story” website. This is how they view their addition to society, and the world. Uber was created in 2009, after the founders Travis Kalanick and Garrett Camp couldn’t catch a cab on a snowy Paris night. Uber started out with good intentions and was a seemingly convenient way to get a safe, cheap ride at the click of a button. They started out small in San Francisco and soon took off to become a worldwide novelty form of transportation. Uber was such a big hit other apps started to appear like Lyft, Sidecar, Flywheel, and Curb etc... (Steinmetz). But in the latest news regarding Uber things have taken a drastic turn and good intentions are no longer enough to cover up the actions the app has brought to our present day society.

In Ubers Privacy policy they provide a bullet pointed list of the information they collect from you like Location, Contacts Transactions, and many others.

Location information seems to be the most contradictory one on the list provided. It states that they collect your location when you request a ride—which seems reasonable—so they can find you and provide you their service, and then goes on to say that they can also collect your precise location if you have the app even just open on your device. What this means is that if you accidentally open the app, or if you just got a ride and you did not fully close out of the app, Uber and their “third parties” that they speak of vaguely in their policies can still access your location if they please. This is not privacy. In Uber’s liability clause—that most people blindly accept—they state that they are not liable for anything. This includes personal injury, damages, or anything resulting from the use of their service (Terms). This means that no matter what happens during a passengers ride Uber cannot and will not be held accountable, even if the damage is done by their own employees.

Uber’s downhill spiral as I stated earlier does not only involve their lack of privacy but their lack of safety. USA Today shared their information on Ubers background checking issues that lack certain criteria taxi companies have

“ The key problem with Uber’s background checks is they lack fingerprinting technology and are not conducted by law enforcement,” says Dave Sutton, spokesman for Who’s Driving You? A public safety initiative of the Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association. “ Uber does not even meet with prospective drivers in person to see if they give off a strange vibe or seem trustworthy” (Kiplinger)

If Uber had better background checking systems people lost in many cases just like the ones shared on the website Who's Driving You which lists 11 death cases directly related to Uber and Uber's twin Lyft. One article linked on the website is a story of an Uber driver in Michigan who shot and killed six people. If Uber had done better background checks, and had conducted real interviewing those who lost their lives may still be alive today. Instead all Uber requires for someone to become a driver is simply to be of age—21 years old—have a car model no later than 2006, have an in-state license, a social security number, car insurance, and a clean driving history within the last 7 years. These requirements are not all bad, but they also are simply not enough.

Sexual assault has put Uber under the lime-light also because it is far more common than the murder cases, and because no real justice is being served. For many who were assaulted the only thing Uber has offered in return is new rating technology, but is it ethical for someone who rapes, or assaults another person to simply be rated $\frac{1}{2}$ a star? No. the answer is no, it is not ethical, and Uber should be held accountable for the drivers they hire to hold the lives of innocent people not only in the U. S. but all around the world. Reporter Gabriel Samuels writes, " Uber drivers are accused of sexually assaulting or raping customers almost three times a month, according to new figures which have outraged rape campaigners" (Samuels). 32 sexual assaults and rapes were reported as of May 2016; this outrageous number is not something that can be overlooked. People using Uber should be able to assume they are safe with their drivers if they are paying for the service. No

one should have to fear they will be assaulted and/or raped when trying to get home safely. Samuel also states, “ It is absolutely the case that one sexual assault is too many let alone 32” (Samuel). Cases like these are so common that Uber was even banned temporarily in New Delhi after a women was raped. Uber is now banned in several places, and suspended in even more as shown in the image below.

It can be argued that Uber has done what it was invented to do. The app has provided a quick and easy way for people—especially while intoxicated—to find a way home without getting behind the wheel themselves. And Uber has addressed some of the issues by saying that they plan on releasing a driverless car, but this may cause more problems than it can solve. While a driverless car would solve the sexual assault and rape issues, Uber is not taking into account that a driverless car will be a very dangerous mode of transportation, because there is no way for a driverless car to react to random human actions. For example, if a human driver decides to run a red light there is no way for a driverless car to analyze that information and make a swift and safe decision. Also a driverless car needs an exact map of its surroundings in order to operate correctly. But when it was tested out during the winter all of the plants had no leaves so when they tried to use the car again after the plant life had re-flourished the car was confused by the leaves, meaning the car cannot understand changes in weather, so the car wouldn't be able to operate in norther U. S. states because of snowfall, or southern states because of heavy, unpredictable rainfall. The driverless car can also not cross over a bridge by itself so it would need a human driver to

take over for it, which would completely defeat the purpose of the car all together (McDonald). And finally in this age of technology there is no way to guarantee that the driverless cars will be un-hackable.

It is clear that Uber is holding themselves only accountable for their intentions, and not what has become of their fast growing service. The app is worth roughly \$14 billion dollars and this has those who work for the app blinded. Money is the root of all evil, but people must stop judging the app on its intentions and hold the creators, along with the criminals they hire accountable for their actions. Based on everything I have stated above Uber is far more unethical than it is ethical. Though it is true that Uber has its perks, people can no longer trade safety for a few dollars.